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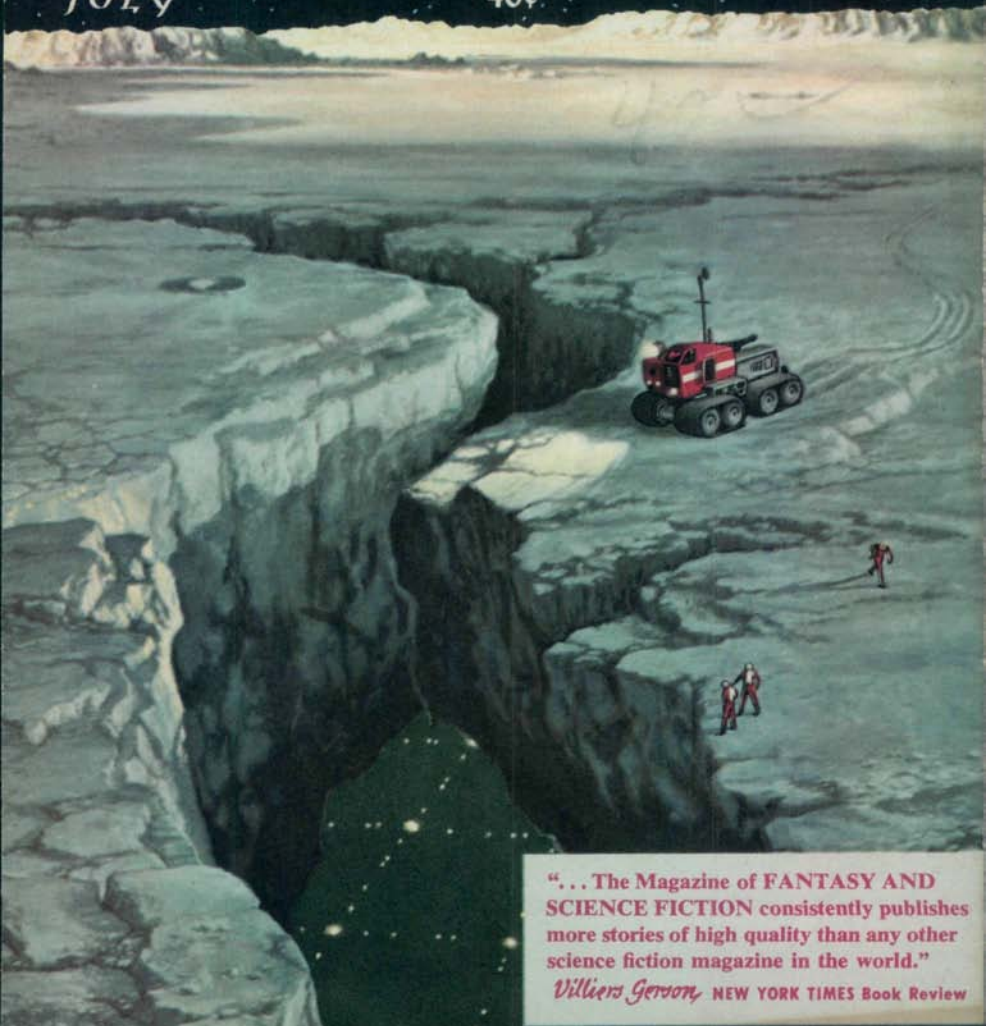
THE MAGAZINE OF Fantasy AND Science Fiction

JULY 40¢

BATTLE OF THE EGGHEADS
an article by
DR. ISAAC ASIMOV

$100 READER CONTEST
see page 4



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THE MAGAZINE OF

Fantasy and Science Fiction

JULY

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Joseph W. Ferman, PUBLISHER — *Robert P. Mills*, EDITOR

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In this issue . . .

H. M. Sycamore's "Success Story" (see page 87) brings up an unsettling, and yet perfectly logical, aspect of time travel which is, as far as *we* know, completely new in science fiction. In Mr. Sycamore's story, Budzik Associates work out an ingenious commercial use for their discovery—but it is by no means the only possible one. In the interest of helping the world prepare for proper exploitation of time travel when it is discovered, the proprietors of F&SF suggest that you think of other possible money-making uses for the unexpected effect of Stan Budzik's machine . . . and we offer specific encouragement in the form of a check for one hundred dollars ($100.), which we will present to the reader sending in the best idea. Each entry in this contest must be made on a single postcard addressed to Success Editor, Fantasy and Science Fiction, 527 Madison Ave., New York 22, New York; entries must be legibly printed or typed, and consist of no more than 50 words; only those entries which have arrived in our offices by July 15, 1959, will be considered; judges will be the editorial staff of F&SF; no entries can be returned; and the decision of the judges will be final. . . .

In our May issue, we asked for opinions from readers on three counts: preferred story lengths; the idea of reprinting stories from early issues of F&SF; and subjects for future science columns by Isaac Asimov. The returns are not quite complete at this writing, but a pattern has emerged. 99% of votes received asked for the best stories regardless of length—novelets, even long novelets it seems, are perfectly agreeable, if the best quality is available in that form. . . . The reprint situation is less clear—a surprising number of our readers have been in attendance for many years, and *they* say that those good old stories are on their shelves, and that no space should be given over to material that is already available to them. At the moment, therefore, we do not plan to bring back more stories from our past. . . . Suggestions for Dr. Asimov's column were numerous and good; and the concensus appears to be emphatically in favor of variety. The good doctor has been so informed.

Coming soon . . .

Next month, Poul Anderson will be present with a new Time Patrol novelet, and a solid, colorful, breathless sort of story it is. Mr. Anderson has also given us a new "Operation" story (remember *Operation Afreet?*), and it will be along shortly. Remember, too, that Robert A. Heinlein's new novel, *Starship Soldier,* will be coming up in a few months. In that context, see the coupon on page 130.

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Robert F. Young's "Goddess in Granite" (F&SF, Oct. 1957) concerned itself with a Virgin whose breasts were 8,000-foot mountains. Mr. Young does not think as tall this time—the tree of his title is not quite *as high as the Empire State Building. Nevertheless, the problems here are as urgent, and the narrative as compelling, as in that earlier epic.*

TO FELL A TREE

by Robert F. Young

The First Day

JUST BEFORE THE TREEMAN'S LIFT began to rise, Strong swung it around so that his back would be toward the trunk. The less he saw of the tree during the initial phase of his ascent, the better. But the lift was little more than a triangular steel frame suspended vertically from a thread-thin winch cable, and before it had risen a hundred feet it swung back to its original position. Whether he liked it or not, the tree was going to be with him right from the start.

The trunk was about fifteen feet away. What it made Strong think of most was a cliff, a convex, living cliff, with bark-prominences eight to ten feet long and fissures three to four feet deep—an arboreal precipice rising into a green and majestic cloud of foliage.

He hadn't intended to look up, but his eyes had followed the sweep of the trunk of their own volition. Abruptly he lowered them. To reassure himself, he looked down into the shrinking village square at the familiar figures of his three companions.

Suhre and Blueskies were standing on one of the ancient burial mounds, smoking morning cigarettes. Strong was too high to see the expressions on their faces, but he knew that Suhre's stolid features were probably set in stubborn resentment and that Blueskies was probably wearing his "buffalo-look." Wright was about a hundred feet out from the base of the tree, operating the winch. His face would be essentially the same as it always was

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a little pinched from worry, perhaps, but still embodying that strange mixture of gentleness and determination, still unmistakably a leader's face.

Strong raised his eyes to the houses surrounding the square. They were even more enchanting seen from above than from below. Omicron Ceti's red-gold radiance lay colorfully on chameleon rooftops, danced brightly on gingerbread façades. The nearer houses were empty now, of course—the village, within a three hundred yard radius of the tree, had been vacated and roped off—but looking at them, Strong got the fanciful impression that pixies had moved in during the night and were taking over the household chores while the villagers were away.

The thought amused him while it lasted, but it did not last long. The convoy of huge timber-carriers that moved into the square and parked in a long waiting line sent it scurrying.

Once again he confronted the tree. He was higher now, and the trunk should have become smaller. It had not—at least not perceptibly. It still resembled a convex cliff, and he felt more like a mountain climber than he did a treeman. Looking up, he saw the first limb. All he could think of was a horizontal sequoia growing on the vertical slope of a dendritic Everest.

Wright's crisp voice sounded over the tree-to-ground radio hookup, the reciever and minuscule batteries of which were attached to Strong's left ear lobe: "Seen any dryads yet?"

Strong tongued on the tiny transmitter attached to his lower lip. "Not yet."

"If you do, let me know."

"Like hell! That long blade of grass I drew gave me exclusive treerights, remember? Whatever I find up here is mine!"

Wright laughed. "Just trying to help out."

"I don't need any help, thanks. What's my height?"

There was a pause. Strong watched the cigarette-size figure of Wright bend over the winch-control panel. Presently: "One hundred and sixty-seven feet. Another hundred and twenty more and you'll be even with the first limb. . . . How do you feel?"

"Not bad."

"Good. Let me know if anything goes wrong. The least little thing."

"Will do." Strong tongued off.

It was growing darker. No, not darker. Greener. The little sunlight that filtered down through the countless strata of foliage in a pale, chlorophyllic glow deepened in hue in ratio to his ascent. Tree-fright touched him, but he dispelled it by applying an antidote he'd learned in treeschool. The antidote was simple: *concen-*

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trate on something, anything at all. He took inventory of the equipment attached to the base-bar of the lift: tree-pegs, tree-rations, blankets; tree-tent, heating unit, peg-hammer; cable-caster, cutter, first-aid pack; climbing belt, saddle-rope, limbline (only the ringed end of the limbline was attached to the bar—the line itself trailed down to a dwindling coil at the tree's base); Timkin-unit, tree-tongs, canteen . . .

At length the lift drew him into the lower foliage. He had expected the leaves to be huge, but they were small and delicate, reminiscent of the leaves of the lovely sugar maple that once had flourished on Earth. Presently he came opposite the first limb, and a flock of scarlet hahaha birds derided his arrival with a chorus of eldritch laughter. They circled around him several times, their little half-moons of eyes regarding him with seeming cynicism, then they spiraled out of sight into the upper branches.

The limb was like a ridge that had torn itself free from a mountain range to hover high above the village. Its branches were trees in their own right, each capable, were it to fall, of demolishing at least one of the houses the colonists loved so dearly.

Why, Strong wondered for the dozenth time, had the original inhabitants of Omicron Ceti 18's major continent built their villages around the bases of such arboreal monsters? The Advance Team had stated in its report that the natives, despite their ability to build beautiful houses, had really been very primitive. But even so, they should have realized the potential threat such massive trees could pose during an electrical storm; and most of all they should have realized that excessive shade encouraged dampness and that dampness was the forerunner of decay.

Clearly they had not. For, of all the villages they had built, the present one was the only one that had not rotted into noisome ruin, just as the present tree was the only one that had not contracted the hypothetical blight that had caused the others to wither away and die.

It was the Advance Team's contention that the natives had built their villages close to the trees because the trees were religious symbols. But, while the fact that they had migrated en masse to the "death-caves" in the northern barrens when the trees began to die certainly strengthened the contention, Strong still found it difficult to accept. The architecture of the houses suggested a practical as well as an artistic race of people, and a practical race of people would hardly commit self-genocide just because their religious symbols turned out to be susceptible to disease. Moreover,

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Strong had removed trees on a good many newly-opened planets, and he had seen the Advance Team proved wrong on quite a number of occasions.

The foliage was below him now, as well as above and around him. He was in a world apart, a hazy, greenish-gold world stippled with tree-flowers (the month was the Omicron Ceti 18 equivalent of June and the tree was in blossom), inhabited only by himself and the hahaha birds, and the insects that constituted their diet. He could see an occasional jigsaw-patch of the square through the intervening leaves, but that was all. Wright was out of sight; so were Suhre and Blueskies.

About fifteen feet below the limb over which he had made his original cable-cast, he told Wright to halt the winch. Then he detached the cable-caster from the base-bar, fitted the butt to his shoulder and started the lift swinging back and forth. He selected the highest limb he could see, one about eighty feet up, and at the extremity of one of his swings on the winch side of the tree, he aimed and squeezed the trigger.

It was like a spider spitting a filament of web. The gossamer cable drifted up and over the chosen limb and its weighted end plummeted down through leaf and flower to dangle inches from his outstretched fingers. He caught it on the next swingback and, still swinging, pressed it against the apex of the lift-triangle till its microscopic fibers rooted themselves in the steel; then he snipped the "new" cable free from the caster with his pocket-snips and returned the caster to the base-bar. Finally he increased the arc of his swing till he could grasp the original cable, which slanted down through the foliage to the winch. He held on to it long enough to squeeze together the two cables—the "old" and the "new"—till they automatically interspliced, and to sever the bypassed section.

The slack in the "new" cable caused the lift to drop several feet. He waited till the swing diminished sufficiently, then told Wright to start the winch again. The infinitesimal Timkens coating the thread-thin cable began rolling over the "new" limb, and the lift resumed its upward journey. Strong leaned back in his safety belt and lit a cigarette.

That was when he saw the dryad.

Or thought he did.

The trouble was, the dryad talk had been a big joke. The kind of a joke that springs up among men whose relationships with real women are confined to the brief intervals between assignments.

You didn't believe it, you told

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yourself; you knew damned well that no matter what tree you climbed on whatever planet, no lovely lady elf was going to come skipping down some leaf-trellised path and throw herself into your yearning arms. And yet all the while you were telling yourself that such a thing was never going to happen, you kept wondering in the dark outlands of your mind where common sense had never dared set foot, whether some day it *might* happen.

All during the voyage in from Earth and all during the ride from the spaceport to the village, they had tossed the joke back and forth. There was—if you took credence in Suhre's and Blueskies' and Wright's talk . . . and in his own talk too—at least one dryad living in the last giant tree on Omicron Ceti 18, and what a time they were going to have catching her!

All right, Strong thought. You saw her. Now let's see you catch her.

It had been the merest glimpse—no more than a suggestion of curves and color and fairy-face—and as the image faded from his retina, his conviction faded too. By the time the lift pulled him up into the bower where he'd thought she'd been, he was positive she would not be there. She was not.

He noticed that his hands were trembling. With an effort he steadied them. It was ridiculous to become upset over a prankish play of sunlight on leaf and limb, he told himself.

Then, at 475 feet, he thought he saw her again.

He had just checked his elevation with Wright when he happened to glance toward the trunk. She appeared to be leaning against the bark, her long leg braced on the limb he had just come abreast of. Tenuous of figure, pixyish of features, golden of hair. She couldn't have been over twenty feet away.

"Hold it," he told Wright in a low voice. When the lift stopped rising he unfastened his safety belt and stepped out upon the limb. The dryad did not move.

He walked toward her slowly. Still she did not move. He rubbed his eyes to clear them, half-hoping she would not. She went on standing where she was, back propped against the trunk, long legs braced on the limb; immobile, statuesque. She wore a short tunic woven of leaves, held in place by a strap looped over her shoulder; delicate sandals, also woven of leaves, interlaced halfway to her calves. He began to think she was real. Then, without warning, she twinkled out of sight.

There was no other phrase for it. She did not walk away or run away or fly away. In the strict sense of the word, she did not

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even disappear. She was simply there one second and not there the next second.

Strong stood still. The exertion he had expended to gain the limb and walk along it had been negligible, and yet he was sweating. He could feel sweat on his cheeks and forehead and neck; he could feel it on his chest and back, and he could feel the sweated dampness of his tree-shirt.

He pulled out his handkerchief and wiped his face. He took one step backward. Another. The dryad did not re-materialize. There was a cluster of leaves where she had been, a patch of sunlight.

Wright's voice sounded in his eareceiver: "Everything all right?"

Strong hesitated a moment. "Everything's fine," he said presently. "Just doing a little reconnaissance."

"How's she look?"

"She—" He realized just in time that Wright was referring to the tree. He wiped his face again, wadded up the handkerchief and replaced it in his pocket. "She's big," he said, when he could trust his voice. "Real big."

"We'll take her all right. We've had big ones before."

"Not this big we haven't."

"We'll take her anyway."

"*I'll* take her," Strong said.

Wright laughed. "Sure you will. But we'll be here to help you, just in case. . . . Ready to 'climb' again?"

"In a minute."

Strong hurried back to the lift. "Let her go," he said.

He had to cable-cast again at around 500 feet, and again at around 590. At about 650 the foliage thinned out temporarily and he was able to make a cast of better than one hundred and fifty feet. He sat back to enjoy the ride.

In the neighborhood of 700 feet he dropped off his tree-tent, blankets and heating unit on a wide limb, and tied them down. The sleeping was always better in the big branches. As his height increased he caught occasional glimpses of the village. Foliage below, but he could see the outermost ones, and beyond them the chemically enriched fields that stretched away to the horizon. The fields were at low ebb now—gold-stubbled with the tiny shoots of recently sown wheat, an endemic variety unequalled elsewhere in the galaxy. But by midsummer the tide would be full and the colonists would reap another of the fabulous harvests that were turning them into first-generation millionnaires.

He could see the specks of housewives puttering in backyards, and gyro-cars crawling like beetles through the streets. He could see children the apparent size of tad-poles swimming in one of the artificial lakes that were a

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feature of each block. All that was missing from the scene was a painter painting a house or a roofer repairing a roof. And for a good reason: *these* houses never ran down.

Or hadn't, up till now.

The wood and the carpentry that had gone into their construction was without parallel. Strong had been inside only one building—the native church that the colonists had converted into a hotel—but the owner, who was also mayor of the village, had assured him that the hotel, basically, was no more than a larger and more ornate counterpart of the other buildings. Strong had never seen such flawless woodwork before, such perfect paneling. Everything was in perfect balance, unified to a degree where it was impossible to tell where foundation and underpining left off and floor and wall began.

Walls blended into windows and windows blended into walls. Stairways didn't simply descend: they rippled down like wood-grained rapids. As for artificial lighting, it emanated from the very wood itself.

The Advance Team, in classifying the natives as primitive, had based its conclusion largely—and perhaps stupidly, Strong thought—on the fact that they had not learned how to use metals till late in their ethnological tenure. But, the eagerness of the colonists to preserve the one remaining village (which the Department of Galactic Lands had permitted) indicated that the miracles the natives had been able to perform with wood more than compensated for the miracles they had been unable to perform with iron and bronze.

He made three more cable-casts before abandoning the lift, then, standing on the limb beneath the one over which he had made the final cast, he buckled on his climber's belt and attached the articles he would need to its snap-locks. Finally he transferred the end of the limbline from the base-bar to the snap-lock nearest his right hip.

His approximate height now was nine hundred and seventy feet, and the tree had tapered to the proportions of the long extinct American elm. He moved in on the limb to the trunk, fashioned a safety belt out of his saddle-rope and snubbed himself into "walking" position. Then, leaning back at a forty-five degree angle, he "walked" around the trunk till he could obtain a clear view of the overhead branches.

He chose a centrally located crotch, about seventeen feet up, for the limbline, then coiled the first nine or ten feet of the line into a lineman's loop and pulled up about thirty feet of slack. He had to turn sideways on the trunk to make the throw, but he got it

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off perfectly, and the coil, which comprised the nucleus of the loop, soared through the crotch and unwound down to where he could easily reach the ringed end.

He returned to the limb, untied his safety belt, and climbed the double line to the crotch. Omicron Ceti 18's lighter gravity had reduced his 180 pounds Earth-weight to a feathery 157½: he did not even draw a deep breath.

After notifying Wright, he settled himself comfortably, detached the V-shaped Timken-unit from his belt and clamped it into place in the crotch. He opened the unit and laid the limbline over the near-frictionless bearings, then closed the unit and locked it. Although he could not see what was taking place on the ground, he knew that Wright was directing the relocating of the winch, the sinking of new winch-anchors, and the substitution of the limbline for the winch-cable. The winch-cable, unneeded for the moment, would be secured to the base of the tree by means of a tree-peg.

After testing the Timken-unit by pulling the limbline back and forth several times, Strong attached the tree-tongs to the line's ringed end. Then he looked around for a good saddle-crotch. He found one presently. It was about fifteen feet above him and its location promised him excellent access to the area he was concerned with—the section ninety feet down from the top of the tree where the limbs began exceeding the one hundred foot limit Wright had set as maximum crest-length.

After making the throw, he "snaked" the rope down till he could reach it, and tied his saddle. The instruction manual they gave you at treeschool had a lot to say about saddles: about the double bowline tied on the shorter length that provided you with a seat, and the tautline hitch—tied round the longer length with the slack from the bowline—that gave you maneuverability. The manual had a lot to say about saddle-technique, too: told you how to descend by putting your weight in the seat and exerting pressure on the top of the hitch; warned you always to feed the slack through the hitch after you climbed to a higher level or when you were walking in from a tonging. If you used it right, the manual said, your saddle was your best friend.

Strong didn't slip into the seat right away. He declared a ten-minute break instead. Leaning back in the limbline crotch, he tried to close his eyes; but the sun got in them, the sun and the leaves and the tree flowers, and the bright blue patches of sky.

The saddle-rope hung down like a silvery liana from the lofty crotch of his choosing, swayed gently in the morning breeze. The

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crotch was about twenty feet below the highest point of the tree, or over a thousand feet above the ground.

The figure was hard to assimilate. He had climbed a good many tall trees; some of them had even run as high as five hundred feet. But this one made them seem insignificant. This one was over a thousand feet high.

A *thousand* feet! . . .

The swaying saddle-rope took on a new meaning. He reached over and touched its knurled surface. He glanced up along its double length. Almost before he knew it, he was climbing; hand over hand at first, then intertwining his feet in the rope and letting it glide between them as he raised his body, "standing" in it while he obtained new hand-holds. Enthusiasm joined his exertion; his blood coursed warmly through his body; his senses sang. He climbed leisurely, confidently. When he reached the crotch he pulled himself into it and looked upward.

The trunk rose into a final bifurcation some ten feet above. He pressed the tiny studs that released the steel spurs contained in the insteps of his tree-boots and stood up. He placed his hands on the dark gray bark. At this height the trunk was less than a foot in diameter and was as smooth as a woman's throat. He raised his left foot and brought it down on an angle. Hard. The spur sank deep into the wood. He put his weight on his left foot and raised his right. He sank the second spur.

He began to climb.

Even if you closed your eyes you could tell when you were nearing the top of a tree. Any tree. The crest swayed more and more as your height increased; the trunk grew smaller beneath your hands; the warmth of the sun intensified as the foliage thinned out around you; your heart beat in ever faster cadence . . .

When he reached the final crotch, Strong slipped one leg through it and looked down upon the world.

The tree was a green cloud, seen from above now rather than from below—a vast green cloud that obscured most of the village. Only the outlying houses were visible along the lacy periphery. Beyond them the "Great Wheat Sea"—as he had come to call it in his mind—rolled soundlessly away to the horizon.

"Archipelago" would have been a better metaphor than "sea." For there were "islands" wherever you looked. "Islands" of rotted villages, sometimes surmounted by the gaunt gray lighthouse of a dead tree, sometimes littered with the gray debris of a fallen one. "Islands" of storage bins built of durable steel-foil; "islands" of equipment sheds built of the same

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material and filled with the sowing-copters and lightweight combines the colonists had leased from the Department of Galactic Lands.

Nearer the village there were other, smaller "islands": the sewage disposal plant; the incinerator; the crematory. Finally there was the brand new "island" of the lumber mill, where the colonists hoped to salvage the wood from this tree.

In a way the tree would be a harvest in itself, for wood was dear on Omicron Ceti 18—almost as dear as it was on Earth. But they wouldn't be getting it for nothing, Strong thought; not if you figured the goodly sum they were going to have to shell out to Tree Killers, Inc. for the tree's removal.

He laughed. He had little sympathy for the colonists. He knew as well as Blueskies what they were doing to the soil, what Omicron Ceti 18 would look like half a century in the future. Sometimes he hated them—

But he found it hard to hate them now. He found it difficult to hate at all, with the morning wind fluttering his tree-shirt and the morning sun fingering his face and the vast blue sky spread out around his shoulders and the whole world spread out beneath his feet.

He lit and smoked a cigarette, and it tasted good on the top of the world, in the wind and the alien sun. He smoked it down till it stung his fingers, then ground it out on the instep of his boot.

When he raised his hand there was blood on his forefinger and thumb.

At first he thought he had cut himself, but when he wiped the blood away there was no sign of a cut or even a scratch. He frowned. Could he possibly have injured his foot? He leaned forward . . . and saw the redness of his instep and the bloody, dripping spur. He leaned farther forward . . . and saw the bloody trail his spurs had left on the smooth gray trunk. Finally he realized that it wasn't his blood at all—

It was the tree's.

The foliage twinkled in the sun and the wind, and the trunk swayed lazily back and forth. And back and forth and back and forth —

Sap!

He had begun to think that the word would never assert itself, that its false synonym would preempt his mind forever.

Sap . . .

It didn't *have* to be transparent. If the right pigments were present, it could be any color—any color under the sun. Purple. Green. Brown. Blue. Red—

Blood-red . . .

There was no reason to assume that, simply because a certain

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characteristic was present in ordinary trees, it necessarily had to be present in this one. There was no arboreal law that said a tree's juice *had* to be colorless.

He began to feel better. Red sap, he thought. Wait'll I tell Wright!

But he didn't say a word about it to Wright when, a moment later, Wright contacted him.

"Almost ready?" Wright asked.

"Not—not quite. Doing a little reconnaissance."

"Quite a favorite occupation of yours this morning."

"In a way."

"Well, since you're going to keep the dryads all to yourself, I won't try to muscle in. Too high for a middle-aged treeman like myself to be climbing, anyway. The reason I called was to tell you we're knocking off for chow. I suggest you do the same."

"Will do," Strong said.

But he didn't. He had tree-rations in his pocket, but he had no appetite to go with them. Instead, he sat quietly in the crotch and smoked another cigarette, then he descended the trunk to the saddle-rope crotch. Quite a bit of the sap got on his hands and he had to wipe it off on his handkerchief.

He retracted his spurs, intertwined his feet in the middle-rope and "skinned" down to the limbline-crotch. He paused there long enough to slip into his saddle, then he "burned" down to the end of the limbline, and attached the tongs to his belt. The first one hundred-footer was about twenty feet below him. He "burned" the rest of the way down to it, the limbline trailing behind him, and started walking out. The limb was quite large at its juncture with the trunk, but it tapered rapidly. When he judged he had covered two thirds of its length he affixed the pointed tongs into the wood, adjusting them so that when the limbline tightened they would get a firm bite on the limb.

The action had a calming effect, and when he tongued on his transmitter he was his usual tree-self, and automatically lapsed into the mock-formal mode of address he and Wright sometimes used in their tree-to-ground exchanges:

"Ready when you are, Mr. Wright."

There was a pause. Then: "You don't believe in long noonings, do you, Mr. Strong?"

"Not when there's a tree the size of this one staring me in the face."

"I'll turn on the winch. Sound off when the slack is out."

"Will do, Mr. Wright."

In its present position the limbline straggled back along the limb to the trunk, then up the trunk to the limbline-crotch. When the winch went into action it rose into a sagging arc . . . a less pronounced arc . . . a straight line. The limb quivered, creaked—

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"Hold it, Mr. Wright."

He walked back to the trunk, feeding his saddle-slack through the tautline hitch. At the trunk, he put his weight into the seat and "burned" down till he was even with the underside of the limb. Then he leaned back in the saddle and drew his pistol-shaped cutter. He set the beam for ten feet and directed the muzzle at the bottom of the limb. He was about to squeeze the trigger when he caught a hint of curves and color on the periphery of his vision. He glanced out to where the limb's leaf-laden branches brushed the noonday sky—

And saw the dryad.

"We're waiting for the Word, Mr. Strong."

Strong swallowed. Sweat had run down from his forehead into his eyes. He wiped them on his shirtsleeve. He still saw the dryad.

She was half sitting, half reclining, on a bough too small to support her weight, and her wispy garment blended so flawlessly with her leafy surroundings that if it had not been for her pixy-face and golden limbs, and her gentle shock of yellow hair, he would have sworn he was not really seeing her at all; and even as it was he almost would have sworn, because her face could have been a newly-opened flower, her limbs graceful patterns of golden wheat showing through the foliage, and her hair a handful of sunlight.

He wiped his eyes again. But she refused to disappear. He waved to her, feeling like a fool. She made no movement. He waved to her again, feeling even more like a fool. He tongued off his transmitter. "Get out of there!" he shouted. She paid no attention.

"What's the holdup, Strong?" Wright's impatience was evident both in his tone of voice and in his dropping of the mock-formal "Mr."

Listen, Strong said to himself: You've climbed hundreds of trees and there wasn't a single dryad in any of them. Not one. There's no such thing as a dryad. There never was such a thing. There never will be. In this tree or any other tree. And there's no more dryad out there on that limb than there's champagne in your canteen!

He forced his eyes back to the underside of the limb towards which his cutter still pointed. He forced himself to squeeze the trigger. A slit appeared in the wood; he could almost feel pain. He tongued on his transmitter. "Up," he said. The limbline twanged as it tightened; the limb sighed. He deepened the undercut. "Up," he said again. This time the limb rose perceptibly. "Now keep a steady strain, Mr. Wright," he said, and brought the invisible

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beam of the cutter slowly up through the wood tissue, freezing the molecular structure inch by inch. The limb rose up and back, separating from the stud. By the time he finished the cut it was hanging parallel to the trunk and was ready to be lowered.

"Take her down, Mr. Wright!"

"Will do, Mr.Strong!"

He remained where he was while the limb passed, severing the larger subsidiary branches so that there would be less chance of its hanging up. When the final section came opposite him he scrutinized it closely. But he saw no sign of a dryad.

He noticed that his hands were trembling again, and looking past them he saw something that made them tremble more: the cutter-beam had temporarily frozen the stub, but the sun was shining full upon it now, and blood was already beginning to ooze from the wound—

No, not blood. Sap. Red sap. My God, what was the matter with him? All the while he kept his eyes on the limbline so that he could notify Wright in case the limb became hung up. But the limb proved to be co-operative: it slipped smoothly through the lower branches and after a while he heard Wright say, "She's down, Mr. Strong. I'm raising the line again." And then, in a shocked voice: "Did you cut yourself, Tom?"

"No," Strong said. "That's sap you're looking at."

"Sap! I'll be damned!" Then: "Suhre says it looks pink to him. Blueskies, though, says it's a deep crimson. What does it look like to you, Strong?"

"It looks like blood," Strong said. He swung around to the other side of the trunk, out of sight of the stub, and waited for the end of the line to come within reach. While he waited he gave the next limb down a good reconnaissance, but he saw no dryad lurking in any of its bowers. By the time he was set-up for the next cut, some of his confidence had returned and he had half forgotten about the "blood."

And then the second limb began its downward journey and he saw the new "blood" oozing from the new wound, and he was sick all over again. But not quite so sick this time: he was becoming inured.

He severed and sent four more limbs down in quick succession. He was lucky on all of them: not a single one became hung up. You *needed* luck when you delimbed a tree from the top down rather than from the bottom up and for that reason the top-to-bottom method was never used except in rare cases such as the present one, where the nearest houses were so close that the utmost care had to be taken in removing the lower, longer limbs. As the utmost

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care could not be taken if overhead growth interfered with their being drawn straight back against the trunk, the easier bottom-to-top method was out for Strong.

He was able to remove eight limbs before it became necessary to move the winch to the opposite side of the tree. After the winch-shift he removed eight more. An excellent afternoon's work in any treeman's book.

At quitting time Wright made the traditional offer: "Want to come down for the night?"

Strong made the traditional refusal: "Like helll"

"The custom of staying in a tree till it's finished shouldn't apply to a tree the size of this one," Wright said.

"Just the same, it does," Strong said. "What's for chow?"

"The mayor's sending you over a special plate. I'll send it up in the lift. In the meantime, climb in, and as soon as we change cables you can ride down as far as your tree-tent."

"Will do."

"We're going to sleep at the hotel. I'll keep my eareceiver on in case you need anything."

The mayor didn't arrive for half an hour, but the plate he brought proved to be worth waiting for. Strong had spent the time setting up his tree-tent, and he ate, now, sitting cross-legged before it. The sun had set, and the hahaha birds were wearing scarlet patterns in the foliage and screaming a raucous farewell to the day.

The air grew noticeably colder, and as soon as he finished eating he got out his heating unit and turned it on. The manufacturers of outdoor heating units took a camper's morale as well as his physical comfort into consideration. This one was shaped like a small campfire and by adjusting a dial you could make its artificial sticks glow bright yellow, deep orange, or cherry-red. Strong chose cherry-red, and the heat emanating so cheerfully from the tiny atomic batteries drove away some of his loneliness.

After a while the moons—Omicron Ceti 18 had three of them—began to rise, and their constantly changing patterns on leaf and limb and flower had a lulling effect. The tree, in its new mood, was lovely. The hahaha birds had settled down for the night, and as there were no singing insects in the vicinity, the quiet was absolute.

It grew rapidly colder. When it was so cold he could see his breath, he withdrew into his tent and pulled his "campfire" into the triangular doorway. He sat there cross-legged in cherry-red solitude. He was very tired. Beyond the fire, the limb stretched out in silver-patterned splendor, and silver-etched leaves hung immobile in the windless night. . . .

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He saw her only in fragments at first: an argent length of leg, a shimmering softness of arm; the darkness where her tunic covered her body; the silvery blur of her face. Finally the fragments drew together, and she was there in all her thin pale loveliness. She walked out of the shadows and sat down on the opposite side of the fire. Her face was much clearer now than it had been those other times—enchanting in its fairy-smallness of features and bluebird-brightness of eyes.

For a long while she did not speak, nor did he, and they sat there silently on either side of the fire, the night all around them, silver and silent and black. And then he said: *You* were *out there on the limb, weren't you? . . . And you were in the bower, too, and leaning against the trunk.*

In a way, she said. *In a way I was.*

And you live here in the tree—

In a way, she said again. *In a way I do.* And then: *Why do Earthmen kill trees?*

He thought a moment. *For a variety of reasons,* he said. *If you're Blueskies you kill them because killing them permits you to display one of the few heritages your race bequeathed you that the white man was unable to take away—your disdain for height. And yet all the while you're killing them, your Amerind soul writhes in self-hatred, because what you're doing to other lands is essentially the same as what the white man did to yours. . . . And if you're Suhre, you kill them because you were born with the soul of an ape, and killing them fulfills you the way painting fulfills an artist, the way creating fulfills a writer, the way composing fulfills a musician.*

And if you're you?

He discovered that he could not lie: *You kill them because you never grew up,* he said. *You kill them because you like to have ordinary men worship you and pat you on the back and buy you drinks. Because you like to have pretty girls turn around and look at you on the street. You kill them because shrewd outfits like Tree Killers, Inc. know your immaturity and the immaturity of the hundreds of others like you, and lure you by offering to provide you with a handsome green uniform, by sending you to treeschool and steeping you in false tradition, by retaining primitive methods of tree-removal because primitive methods make you seem almost like a demigod to someone watching from the ground, and almost like a man to yourself.*

Take us the Earthmen, she said, *the little Earthmen, that spoil the vineyard; for our vineyards are in blossom.*

You stole that from my mind, he said. *But you said it wrong. It's 'foxes', not 'Earthmen.'*

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Foxes have no frustrations. I said it right.

. . . *Yes,* he said, *you said it right.*

Now I must go. I must prepare for tomorrow. I'll be on every limb you cut. Every falling leaf will be my hand, every dying flower my face.

I'm sorry, he said.

I know, she said. *But the part of you that's sorry lives only in the night. It dies with every dawn.*

I'm tired, he said. *I'm terribly tired. I've got to sleep.*

Sleep then, little Earthman. By your little toy fire, in your little toy tent . . . Lie back, little Earthman, and cuddle up in your warm snug bed—

Sleep . . .

The Second Day

The singing of hahaha birds awakened him, and when he crawled out of his tent he saw them winging through arboreal archways and green corridors; through leaf-laced skylights, and foliaged windows pink with dawn.

He stood up on the limb, stretched his arms and filled his chest with the chill morning air. He tongued on his transmitter. "What's for breakfast, Mr. Wright?"

Wright's voice came back promptly: "Flapjacks, Mr. Strong. We're at table now, stashing them away like mad. But don't worry: the mayor's wife is whipping up a whole batch just for you. . . . Sleep good?"

"Not bad."

"Glad to hear it. You've got your work cut out for you today. Today you'll be getting some of the big ones. Line up any good dryads yet?"

"No. Forget the dryads and bring around the flapjacks, Mr. Wright."

"Will do, Mr. Strong."

After breakfast he broke camp and returned tent, blankets and heating unit to the lift. Then he rode the lift up to where he'd left off the preceding day. He had to lower both the saddle-rope and the limbline; the saddle rope because of its limited length, the limbline because its present crotch was too high to permit maximum leverage. When he finished, he started out on the first limb of the day.

He paced off ninety feet and knelt and affixed the tongs. Then he told Wright to take up the limbline slack. Far below him he could see houses and backyards. At the edge of the square the timber-carriers were drawn up in a long line, ready to transport the new day's harvest to the mill.

When the line was taut, he told Wright to ease off, then he walked back to the trunk and got into delimbing position. He raised the cutter, pointed it. He touched the trigger.

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I'll be on every limb—

The dream rushed back around him and for a while he could not free himself. He looked out to the limb's end where the leaf-embroidered subsidiary branches twinkled in the sun and the wind. This time he was surprised when he did *not* see a dryad.

After a long while he brought his eyes back to where they belonged, and re-aimed the cutter. *For all men kill the thing they love,* he thought, and squeezed the trigger. *By all let this be heard.* "Take her up, Mr. Wright," he said.

When the limb was being lowered he moved out of the way and severed the larger subsidiary branches as it passed. Most of them would hang up in the foliage below, but eventually they would end up on the ground as he worked his way down the tree. The end branches were too small to bother with and when they came opposite him he turned away to inspect the next limb. Just before he did so, one of the soft leaves brushed his cheek.

It was like the touch of a woman's hand. He recoiled. He wiped his cheek furiously.

His fingers came away red.

It was some time before he realized that there had been blood—no, not blood, sap—on his fingers *before* he had wiped his cheek; but he was so shaken by then that the realization did little good, and the little good it did do was cancelled when he moved back to check the limbline and saw the "blood" welling out of the new stub.

For an insane moment all he could think of was the stump of a woman's arm.

Presently he became aware of a voice in his mind. "Tom," the voice said. "Tom! Are you all right, Tom?" It dawned on him that it was Wright's voice and that it wasn't in his mind at all, but emanating from his earreceiver.

"Yes?"

"I said, 'Are you all right?'"

"Yes . . . I'm all right."

"It took you long enough to answer! I wanted to tell you that the lumber mill superintendent just sent word that all the wood we've removed so far is half-rotten. He's afraid they won't be able to salvage any of it. So watch your step, and make sure your limbline crotches are solid."

"The tree looks healthy enough to me," Strong said.

"Maybe so, but don't trust it any further than you have to. It doesn't add up in more ways than one. I sent several samples of the sap to the village lab, and they say that in its crude stage—that's before it goes through the photosynthesis process—it contains an unusually high concentration of nutrients, and in its elaborated stage—that's after it goes through

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the photosynthesis process—it consists of twice as many carbohydrates and twice as much oxygen as even a healthy thousand-foot tree needs to sustain itself. And not only that, they say that there's no pigment present that could possibly account for the sap's unusual color. So maybe we just imagine we're seeing 'blood'."

"Or maybe the tree induces us to imagine we're seeing 'blood,'" Strong said.

Wright laughed. "You've been consorting with too many dryads, Mr. Strong. Watch yourself now."

"Will do," Strong said, tonguing off.

He felt better. At least he wasn't the only one who was bothered by the "blood." The next cut did not bother him nearly so much, even though the stub "bled" profusely. He "burned" down to the next limb and started out upon it. Suddenly he felt something soft beneath his foot. Glancing down, he saw that he had stepped on a flower that had fallen either from the crest or from one of the limbs he had just removed. He stooped over and picked it up. It was crushed and its stem was broken, but even dying, it somehow managed to convey a poignant suggestion of a woman's face.

He attacked the tree, hoping that action would blunt his perceptions.

He worked furiously. Sap got on his hands and stained his clothing, but he forced himself to ignore it. He forced himself to ignore the tree-flowers, too, and the leaves that sometimes caressed his face. By noon he had cut his way down past the limb where he had spent the night, and above him nearly three hundred feet of stubbed trunk rose into the foliaged crest.

He made a few swift calculations: the crest represented about ninety feet; the distance from the ground to the first limb was two hundred and eighty-seven feet; he had de-limbed nearly three hundred feet. Roughly, then, he had about three hundred and fifty feet to go . . .

After a brief lunch of tree-rations, he went back to work. The sun was blistering now, and he missed the limbs and leaves that had shaded him yesterday. He had to keep moving his saddle-rope to lower and lower stub-crotches, but the length of the lower limbs made moving the limbline unnecessary. He was a little awed, despite himself, at their size. Even when you knew that the line you were using *couldn't* break, it was unnerving to watch so thin a cable pull a two- to three-hundred-foot limb from a horizontal to a vertical position and then support it while it was being lowered to the ground.

The tree "bled" more and more

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as his downward progress continued. The "blood" from the upper stubs kept dripping down into the lower branches, smearing limbs and leaves and making his work a nightmare of incarnadine fingers and red-splotched clothing. Several times he came close to giving up, but each time he reminded himself that if he did not finish the job, Suhre, who had drawn the second longest blade of grass, would; and somehow the thought of Suhre's insensitive fingers manipulating the cutter beam was even more unendurable than the "blood." So he persisted, and when the day was done he had less than two hundred feet to go.

He pitched his tent on the topmost lower limb, some five hundred feet down from the crest, and asked Wright to send up water, soap and towels. When Wright complied, he stripped, soaped himself thoroughly, and rinsed the soap suds away. After drying himself, he washed out his clothes in the remaining water and hung them over the campfire. He felt better. When Wright sent up his supper—another special plate prepared by the mayor's wife—he ate cross-legged before his tent, a blanket wrapped around his shoulders. By the time he finished, his clothes were dry, and he put them on. The stars came out.

He opened the thermo-cup of coffee that had accompanied his meal and smoked a cigarette between sips.

He wondered if she would come tonight.

The night grew chill. At length the first moon rose, and before long her two silvery sisters came too. Their argent radiance transformed the tree. The limb on which he sat seemed part of a huge configuration of limbs that formed the petals of a massive flower. And then he saw the stubbed and ugly trunk rising out of the flower's center and the metaphorical illusion collapsed.

But he did not turn his eyes away. He stood up instead and faced the trunk and looked up at the cruel caricature he had created. Up, up he looked, to where the crest showed dark and lustrous against the sky, as lovely as a woman's hair . . . There was a flower tucked in her hair, he noticed; a lonely flower glowing softly in the moonlight.

He rubbed his eyes and looked again. The flower was still there. It was an unusual flower, quite unlike the others: It bloomed just above the highest crotch—the crotch where he had first seen her blood.

The moonlight grew brighter. He located the limbline-crotch up there, and followed the limbline down with his eyes to where he had secured it after the day's operations. He reached out and

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touched it and it felt good to his fingers, and presently he began climbing in the moonlight.

Up, up he went, his biceps knotting, his laterals swelling against his shirt. Up into moonlight, into magic. The lower branches dwindled into a silvery mass beneath him. When he came to the saddle-rope crotch, he pulled the rope free and coiled and slung it over his shoulder. He felt no tiredness, knew no shortness of breath. It wasn't until he reached the limbline-crotch that his arms became weary and his breathing rapid. He coiled a lineman's loop and threw it through a stub-crotch some fifteen feet above his head. Eight more throws brought him up to the original sadlde-rope crotch. His chest was tight, and his swollen muscles throbbed with pain. He released his spurs and started up the final section of the trunk. When he reached the highest crotch, he saw her sitting on an overhead bough, and the flower was her face.

She made room for him on the bough and he sat down beside her, and far below them the tree spread out like a huge upended umbrella, the lights of the village twinkling like colored raindrops along its leaf-embroidered edges. She was thinner, he saw, and paler, and there was a sadness in her eyes.

You tried to kill me, didn't you? he said, when his breath came back. *You didn't think I could make it up here.*

I knew you could make it, she said. *Tomorrow is when I'll kill you. Not tonight.*

How?

I—I don't know.

Why should you want to kill me? There are other trees—if not here, then in some other land.

For me there is only one, she said.

We always make jokes about dryads, he said. *Myself and the others. It's funny though: it never occurred to any of us that if there was such a thing as a dryad, we'd be the most logical people in the galaxy for her to hate.*

You don't understand, she said.

But I do understand. I know how I'd *feel if I had a home of my own and somebody came around and started tearing it down.*

It isn't really like that at all, she said.

Why isn't it like that? The tree is your home, isn't it? Do you live in it all alone?

. . . *Yes,* she said. *I'm all alone.*

I'm all alone, too, he said.

Not now, she said. *You're not alone now.*

No. Not now.

Moonlight washed down through the foliage, spattering their shoulders with silver drops. The Great Wheat Sea was silver

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now, instead of gold, and a dead tree in the distance showed like the silver mast of a sunken ship, its dead branches empty booms where foliage sails had fluttered, in summer sunlight and warm winds, on spring mornings when the first breeze came up, on autumn afternoons before the frosts . . .

What did a dryad do, he wondered, when her tree died?

She dies, too, she answered, before he had a chance to ask.

But why?

You wouldn't understand.

He was silent. Then: *Last night I thought I dreamed you. After I awoke this morning, I was sure I dreamed you.*

You had to think you dreamed me, she said. *Tomorrow you'll think you dreamed me again.*

No, he said.

Yes, she said. *You'll think so because you have to think so. If you think otherwise you won't be able to kill the tree. You won't be able to stand the sight of the 'blood.' You won't be able to accept yourself as sane.*

Perhaps you're right.

I know I'm right, she said. *Horribly right. Tomorrow you'll ask yourself how there can possibly be such a thing as a dryad, especially one that speaks English, especially one that quotes poetry out of my mind; especially one that has the power to entice me into climbing over five hundred feet, at the risk of my life, just so I can sit on a moonlit limb talking to her.*

Come to think of it, how can there be? he said.

There, you see? It isn't even morning yet, and already you're beginning not to believe. You're beginning to think again that I'm nothing more than a play of light on leaves and limbs; that I'm nothing more than a romantic image out of your loneliness.

There's a way to tell, he said, and reached out to touch her. But she eluded his hand and moved farther out on the bough. He followed, and felt the bough sag beneath him.

Please don't, she said. *Please don't.* She moved farther away, so pale and thin now that he could hardly see her against the starred darkness of the sky.

I knew you weren't real he said. *You couldn't have been real.*

She did not answer. He strained his eyes—and saw leaf and shadow and moonlight, and nothing more. He started moving back toward the trunk, and suddenly he felt the bough bend beneath him and heard the sound of fibers parting. The bough did not break all at once. Instead it bent in toward the tree and he was able, just before it snapped free, to throw both his arms around the trunk and to cling there long enough to sink his spurs.

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For a long time he did not move. He listened to the diminishing swish of the bough's passage, heard the prolonged whisper of its journey through the foliage far below, the faint thud as it hit the ground.

At last he started down. The descent was unreal, seemed endless.

He crawled into the tent and pulled the campfire in after him. His tiredness buzzed in his brain like a sleepy swarm of bees. He wanted desperately to have done with the tree. To hell with tradition, he thought. He'd finish the de-limbing, then Suhre could take over.

But he knew he was lying in his teeth; that he'd never let Suhre touch a cutter beam to so much as a single branch. Felling *this* tree was no job for an ape. Felling *this* tree was a job for a man.

Presently he fell asleep, thinking of the last limb.

The Third Day

It was the last limb that nearly got him.

Noon had arrived by the time he had severed the others, and he stopped to eat. He had hardly any appetite. The tree, limbless and graceful for the first two hundred and eighty-seven feet, stubbed and grotesque for the next six hundred and forty-five, green and symmetrical for the remaining ninety, made him sick just to look at it. Only the thought of Suhre climbing into those dying branches made it possible for him to go on. If the thing you loved had to be killed, then it were best for you yourself to do it; for if mercy could be a part of murder, certainly a lover was best qualified to bestow it.

The first limb had finally become the last limb, and extended almost five hundred incongruous feet over the square and the village. After he finished eating he started walking out on it. When he had paced off three hundred and thirty feet, he affixed the tongs. They were the largest pair the company owned, and, while light, were extremely unwieldy. But he finally got them set up the way he wanted them, and he paused a moment to rest.

The limb was narrow enough at this point for him to see over its edge. He had quite an audience: Wright and Suhre and Blueskies of course, and the timber-carrier drivers; and in addition there were hundreds of colonists, clustered in the streets beyond the roped off area, looking up with wondering faces. Somehow their presence failed to give him the gratifying thrill amateur audiences usually gave him. Instead he found himself wondering what they would do if he were to drop

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the limb straight down. It would be good for at least a score of houses, and if he were to jump-cut it, it would be good for half that many more.,

Abruptly he realized his apostasy and tongued on his transmitter: "Take her up, Mr. Wright."

The tightened limbline lent the effect of a suspension bridge supported by a single cable. He walked back to the trunk, and when he reached it, got into delimbing position. He drew and aimed his cutter. As he squeezed the trigger, a flock of hahaha birds erupted from the foliage at the limb's end. "Take her up some more, Mr. Wright."

The limb groaned, rose slightly. The hahaha birds flew three times around the trunk, then soared up into the crest and out of sight. He cut again. It was the sunward side of the tree, and the sap began to ooze out of the slit and trickle down the trunk. He shuddered, cut some more. "Keep a steady strain, Mr. Wright." The limb rose, inch by inch, foot by foot. Awesomely, monstrously. Some of the others had been giants; this one dwarfed them. "A little faster, Mr. Wright. She's twisting my way."

The limb steadied, rose back, back toward the trunk. He stole a glance below. Suhre and Blueskies had finished cutting the last limb he had sent down into sections small enough for the carrier-winches to handle, and were watching him intently. Wright was standing by the tree-winch, his eyes focused on the rising limb. The square down there had a reddish cast. So had the three men's clothing.

Strong wiped his face on his stained shirtsleeve and returned his attention to the cut. He tried to concentrate on it. The limb was almost perpendicular now, and the critical moment had arrived. He wiped his face again. Lord, the sun was hot! And there was no shade to protect him. No shade whatsoever. Not a vestige, not a mote, not an iota of shade . . .

He wondered what price tree-shade would bring if there were an acute shortage of it throughout the galaxy. And how would you sell it if you had some to sell? By the cubic foot? By the temperature? By the quality?

Good morning, madam. I'm in the tree-shade business. I deal in rare tree-shades of all kinds: in willow-shade, oak-shade, apple-tree-shade, maple-shade, to name just a few. Today I'm running a special on a most unusual kind of tree-shade newly imported from Omicron Ceti 18. It's deep, dark, cool and refreshing—just the thing to relax you after a day in the sun —and it's positively the last of its kind on the market. You may think you know your tree-shades, madam, but you have never known a tree-shade like this one.

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Cool winds have blown through it, birds have sung in it, dryads have frolicked in it the day long—

"Strong!"

He came out of it like a swimmer coming out of the depths of the sea. The limb was swinging darkly towards him, twisting free from the stub along the uneven line of his undercut. He could hear the loud ripping of wood tissue and the grinding sound of bark against bark. He saw the "blood."

He tried to leap out of the way, but his legs had turned to lead and all he could do was watch the relentless approach and wait till those tons and tons of solid fiber broke completely free and descended upon him and blended his blood with their own.

He closed his eyes. *Tomorrow is when I'll kill you,* she had said. *Not tonight.* He heard the heavy *thungg* as the limbline tautened beneath the full weight of the limb, and he felt the tree shudder. But he knew no crushing impact, no scraping of smashed body against the trunk. He knew nothing but the darkness of his closed eyelids and the feeling that time had ceased to pass.

"Strong! For God's sake get out of there!"

He opened his eyes then. The limb, at the last moment, had swung the opposite way. Now it was swinging back. Life returned to his legs, and he scrambled and clawed his way around the trunk. The tree was still shuddering and he was unable to brace himself in his saddle, but he managed to cling to the bark-prominences till the shock-waves died away. Then he worked his way back around the trunk to where the limb was swinging gently back and forth on the end of the limbline.

"All right, Strong. That's all for you. I'm grounding you right now!"

Looking down, he saw Wright standing by the winch, hands on hips, gazing angrily up at him. Blueskies had taken over the winch-controls, and Suhre was buckling on his climber's belt. The limb was rapidly nearing the ground.

So I'm grounded, Strong thought.

He wondered why he didn't feel relieved. He'd wanted to be grounded, hadn't he?

He lay back in his saddle and looked up at his handiwork: at the macabre stubs and the disembodied crest. There was something beautiful about the crest, something unbearably beautiful. It was more gold than green, more like a woman's hair than limbs and leaves—

"Did you hear me, Strong? I said you were grounded!"

Suddenly he thought of Suhre climbing up into those lovely golden tresses, defiling them with his brutal hands; raping them,

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destroying them. If it had been Blueskies he wouldn't have cared. But Suhrel

He lowered his eyes to the limbline-crotch. The last limb had reached the ground by now, and the limbline was no longer in motion. His eyes traced its silvery length down the trunk to where it hung several feet away, and he reached out and grasped it and climbed it to the top of the stub he had just created. He slipped out of his saddle, pulled the rope down, coiled and slung it over his shoulder—

"I'm telling you for the last time, Strong!"

"To hell with you, Wright," Strong said. "This is *my* tree!"

He started up the limbline. Wright cursed him steadily for the first hundred feet, changed to a more conciliatory tone when he passed the halfway mark. Strong paid no attention. "All right, Tom," Wright said finally, "finish it then. But don't try to climb all the way to the crest. Use the lift."

"Shove the lift," Strong said.

He knew he was being unreasonable, but he didn't care. He wanted to climb; he wanted to use his strength; he wanted to hurt his body; he wanted to know pain. He began to know it some two hundred feet down from the limbline-crotch. By the time he reached the crotch he knew it well. But not as well as he wanted to know it, and, without pausing, he coiled a lineman's loop, threw it through an overhead stub-crotch, and continued his ascent. It took him three more throws to make the first crest-limb, and he pulled himself gratefully into leaf-sweet coolness. His muscles screamed and his lungs burned and his throat felt like caked mud.

When some of his strength returned he drank sparingly from his canteen, then he lay quietly in the coolness, not thinking, not moving, not feeling. Vaguely he heard Wright's voice—"You're a damned fool, but you're a good treeman, Mr. Strong!" But he was too exhausted to answer.

Gradually the rest of his strength returned, and he stood up on the limb and smoked a cigarette. He looked up into the foliage, located his original saddle-rope crotch, and threw for it. From the crotch he began a systematic scrutiny of the crest. He didn't really expect to find her; but before he made the first topping he had to *know* that she wasn't there.

Hahaha birds eyed him with half-moon eyes. Tree-flowers bloomed in bowers. Sun-dappled leaves quivered in a little breeze.

He wanted to call out to her, but he didn't know her name. If she had a name. Funny he'd never thought to ask her. He stared at unusual twists of limbs, at unique patterns of leaves. He looked long

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at tree-flowers. If she was not here, she was nowhere—

Unless, during the night, she had left the tree and hidden herself in one of the vacated houses. But he did not think she had. If she was real and not his fancy, she would never leave her tree; and if she wasn't real and was his fancy, she *couldn't* leave her tree.

Apparently she was neither: the crest was empty—empty of her flower-face, her leafy tunic, her wheat-hued length of leg and arm; her sunny hair. He sighed. He didn't know whether to be relieved or disappointed. He had dreaded finding her because if she'd been in the crest, he wouldn't have known what to do. But now he knew that he had dreaded *not* finding her, too.

"What are you doing up there, Mr. Strong? Saying good by to your dryad?"

Startled, he looked down into the square. Wright and Suhre and Blueskies were a trio of almost indistinguishable specks. "Just looking her over, Mr. Wright," he said. "The crest, I mean. There's about ninety feet of her: think you can handle that much all at once?"

"I'll take a chance, Mr. Strong. But I want the rest in fifty-foot sections, as long as the diameter of the trunk permits."

"Stand by then, Mr. Wright."

The crest, when it fell, seemed to bow goodby to the sky. Hahaha birds erupted from it, streaked in a scarlet haze toward the horizon. It floated down to the ground like a green cloud, and the swish of its leaves was like the pattering of a thousand summer raindrops.

The tree shook like the shoulders of a woman sobbing.

"Well done, Mr. Strong," Wright said presently. "Now as nearly as I can estimate, you can get about eleven fifty-footers before the increasing diameter of the trunk rules them out. Then you'll have to take two one hundred-footers. If you drop them right they shouldn't give us any trouble. That'll leave some two hundred feet for the base-cut, and you'll have to fell it so that the last fifty feet comes down in one of the village streets; we'll figure that out when you get down here. So in all, then, you've got fourteen more cuts to make. Think you can finish up today?"

Strong looked at his watch. "I doubt it, Mr. Wright."

"If you can, fine. If you can't, we've got all day tomorrow. Just don't take any chances, Mr. Strong."

The first fifty-footer nosed into the black soil of the square, paused a moment, then toppled on its side. The second followed in its wake—

And the third and the fourth—

It was funny, Strong thought, the way physical activity kept ev-

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erything sane and in place. He found it hard to believe now that less than half an hour ago he had been looking for a dryad. That less than twenty-four hours ago he had been talking to one . . .

And the fifth and the sixth—

On the seventh, his pace began to slow. He was nearing the halfway mark and the diameter of the trunk had increased to nearly thirty feet. Snubbing himself to it was no longer possible: to get into topping position he had to drive tree-pegs and run his improvised safety-belts through the slot in their end. But the slower pace gave Suhre and Blueskies a chance to cut the increasingly larger sections into suitable dimensions for the carriers. They had fallen behind; now they were beginning to catch up. The colonists, according to Wright, had given up hope of salvaging the wood and were piling it in a cleared area well away from the mill, preparatory to burning it.

Earlier in the afternoon a wind had sprung up. Now it began to die. The sun grew hotter; the tree "bled" more and more. Strong kept glancing down into the square. With its red-tinted grass and stub-gored sod, it had some of the aspects of a charnel house; but he was hungry for the feel of earth beneath his feet, and even "blood"-stained ground looked good to him.

He squinted repeatedly at the sun. He'd been in the tree nearly three days now, and did not relish spending another night in its branches. Or rather, in its stubs. But he had to admit, after he finished the final fifty-footer, that he was going to have to. By then the sun was almost out of sight beyond the Great Wheat Sea, and he knew he couldn't possibly drop even the first hundred-footer before darkness fell.

The lowest stub, upon which he now stood, was roomy enough for twenty tree-tents. Wright cablecast over it (the lift had been lowered earlier in the afternoon, and the winch-cable reeled in), and sent up his supplies and supper. Supper turned out to be another of the mayor's special plates. After setting up his tree-tent Strong picked at the food indifferently; his appetite of yesterday was gone.

He was so tired that he didn't even wash—though Wright had sent up soap and water, too—and when he finished eating, he lay back on the coarse bark and watched the silver rising of the moons and the pale whispering into life of the stars. This time when she came, she tiptoed up and sat down beside him and gazed into his face with her blue sad eyes. The whiteness of her skin shocked him, and the thinness of her cheeks made him want to cry.

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I looked for you this morning, he said. *I couldn't find you. Where do you go when you disappear?*

Nowhere, she said.

But you must go somewhere.

You don't understand, she said.

No, he said. *I guess I don't. I guess I never will.*

Yes you will, she said. *Tomorrow you'll understand.*

Tomorrow will be too late.

Tonight is too late. Yesterday was too late. It was too late before you even climbed into the tree.

Tell me, he said. *Are you a member of the race that built the village?*

In a way, she said.

How old are you?

I don't know, she said.

Did you help to build the village?

I built the village alone.

Now you're lying, he said.

I never lie, she said.

What happened to the original race?

They grew up. They ceased to be simple. They became complex and sophisticated, civilized. And as they became civilized, they began ridiculing the customs of the ancestors as being all ignorance and superstition, and they set up new customs. They made things of iron and bronze, and it took them less than one hundred years to destroy an ecological balance that not only had helped to keep them alive but had supplied them with a reason to live—a reason so strong that it was almost a life-force. When they discovered what they had done, they were horrified; but they made the discovery too late.

And so they died?

You've seen their villages.

Yes, I've seen their villages, he said. *And I've read in the Advance Team's report about the death-caves in the northern barrens into which they crawled with their children to die. But what about this village? They could have saved this one in the same way we are by removing the tree.*

She shook her head. *You still don't understand,* she said. *In order to receive, one must also give: that was the law they broke. Some of them broke it sooner than others, but eventually all of them broke it and had to pay the penalty.*

You're right, he said. *I don't understand.*

Tomorrow you will. Tomorrow everything will be clear.

Last night you tried to kill me, he said. *Why?*

I didn't try to kill you. You tried to kill yourself. Today was when I tried to kill you.

With the limb?

With the limb.

But how?

It doesn't matter. All that matters is, I didn't. Couldn't.

Where will you go tomorrow?

Why should you care where I go?

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I do.

You couldn't possibly be in love with me—

How do you know I couldn't be?

Because— Because—

Because I don't think you're real?

You don't, do you? she said.

I don't know what to think, he said. *Sometimes I think you are, sometimes I think you aren't.*

I'm as real as you are, she said. *Though in a different way.*

He reached up, abruptly, and touched her face. Her skin was soft and cold. As cold as moonlight, as soft as a flower. It wavered before his eyes; her whole body wavered. He sat up, turned towards her. She was light and shadow, leaf and flower; the scent of summer, the breath of night. He heard her voice. It was so faint he could hardly make out her words: *You shouldn't have done that. You should have accepted me for what I was. Now you've spoiled it. Now we must spend our last night together, alone.*

So you weren't real after all, he said. *You were never real.*

No answer.

But if you weren't real, I must have imagined you, he said. *And if I imagined you, how could you tell me things I didn't know?*

No answer.

He said: *You make what I'm doing seem like a crime. But it isn't a crime. When a tree becomes a menace to a community, it should be removed.*

No answer.

Just the same, I'd give anything if it didn't have to be this way, he said.

Silence.

Anything at all—

The space beside him remained empty. He turned, finally, and crawled into his tent and drew his campfire in after him. His tiredness had turned him numb. He fumbled with his blankets with numb fingers, wrapped them around his numb body. He drew up his numb knees and hugged them with his numb arms.

"Anything at all," he murmured. "Anything at all . . ."

The Fourth Day

Sunlight seeping through the tent-wall awoke him. He kicked free of his blankets and crawled out into the morning.

He saw no scarlet winging of hahaha birds; he heard no morning birdsong. The tree was silent in the sunlight. Empty. Dead.

No, not quite dead. A cluster of leaves and flowers grew green and white and lovely by the entrance of the tent. He could not bear to look at them.

He stood up on the stub and breathed deeply of the morning air. It was a gentle morning. Mist was rising from the Great Wheat Sea and a scattering of cirrus

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clouds hung in the bright blue sky like new-washed laundry. He walked to the end of the stub and looked down. Wright was oiling the winch. Suhre was cutting up the last fifty-footer. Blueskies was nowhere in sight.

"Why didn't you wake me, Mr. Wright?"

Wright looked up, located his face. "Thought you could stand a few extra winks, Mr. Strong."

"You thought correctly . . . Where's the Amerind?"

"The buffalo caught up to him again. He's drowning them at the hotel bar."

A two-wheeled gyro-car pulled into the square and a plump man, carrying a basket, got out. The mayor, Strong thought. Breakfast. He waved, and the mayor waved back.

The contents of the basket proved to be ham and eggs and coffee. Strong ate hurriedly, then collapsed his tent, folded it, and sent it down on the lift along with his blankets and campfire. He got ready for the first cut. It would be considerably less than one hundred feet because the stub was centered on the three hundred foot mark. It came off perfectly, and he "burned" down in his saddle for the second. This one would have to go at least one hundred and twenty feet in order to leave the maximum of two hundred for the base-cut. He estimated the distance carefully.

After notching the section on the side Wright wanted the fall, he worked his way around toward the opposite side of the trunk, playing out his saddle-rope as he went. The bark-prominences and the fissures made the operation relatively simple, and he even paused now and then to look down into the square. The square was closer now than it had been for days, and it and the houses and the streets looked strange, from his new perspective, as did the hordes of colonists watching from beyond the vacated area.

Wright informed him when he was directly opposite the center of the notch, and he drove a tree-peg. It took but a moment to transfer his saddle from the overhead stub-crotch to the peg-slot. He leaned back in the seat, braced his feet against one of the bark-prominences, and began the cut.

He began it gingerly. He was working with thousands of tons and the least miscalculation could bring those thousands of tons down upon him. The trouble was, he had to cut *above* the tree-peg, and to do so he had to hold the cutter at arm's length above his head, at the same time keeping the line of the beam at right angles to the trunk.

It was a tricky operation and demanded good eyesight and excellent judgment. Ordinarily Strong possessed both, but today

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he was tired. He didn't have any idea quite how tired till he heard Wright shout.

It was the bark-prominences that had thrown him off. He realized that instantly. Instead of using the whole of the visible trunk in estimating his beam-angle, he had used only a limited area and the prominences in that area weren't true. However, the realization did him no good: the one hundred and twenty foot section was already toppling towards him and there was nothing he could do to stop it.

It was like clinging to the face of a cliff and seeing the entire top section start falling outward in a slow but inevitable arc that would eventually enclose him between earthen jaws. The jaws were wood, in this case, but the analogy was basically accurate: the fate of a gnat squeezed between two handfuls of earth differs but little from the fate of a gnat squeezed between two sticks.

He felt nothing; terror had not yet had time to take root. He watched wonderingly while the falling section blotted out the sun and turned the fissures between the bark-prominences into dark caves. He listened wonderingly to a voice that he was sure was emanating from his own brain, but which could not be emanating from his own brain because it was too sweet and poignant to have his mind as a source-place.

Into the fissure. Hurry!

He could not see her; he wasn't even sure it was her voice. But his body responded, squeezing itself into the nearest fissure, squirming back as far as it could go. Another second and the effort would have been wasted, for the moment his shoulder touched the backwall of the fissure, the upended butt of the section came thundering down tearing his tree-peg out by the steel roots; roaring, crashing, splintering, finally passing from sight.

The fissure filled with sunlight. Except for himself, it was empty.

Presently he heard the heavy *thud* as the section struck the ground. Another, more prolonged, *thud* followed, and he knew that it had landed head-on and then fallen lengthwise into the square. He waited almost hopefully for the sounds of splintering wood and breaking glass and the other sundry sounds houses make when a heavy object drops upon them, but he heard nothing.

The fissure had no floor. He was holding himself in position by pressing his knees against one wall while pressing his back against the other. Now he inched his way to the mouth and peered down into the square.

The section had landed on an angle, plowing a huge furrow in the earth, gouging out ancient burial artifacts and bits of human bones. Afterwards it had toppled

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back away from the nearer houses. Wright and Suhre were running up and down its length, looking for his mangled body. He heard himself laughing. He knew it was himself; not because he recognized his voice, but because there was no one else in the fissure. He laughed till his chest hurt and he could barely breathe, till there was no more hysteria left in him. Then, when his breath came back, he tongued on his transmitter and said: "Are you looking for me, Mr. Wright?"

Wright went rigid. He turned, looked up. Suhre followed suit. For a moment no one said a word. At last Wright raised his arm and wiped his face on his shirtsleeve. "All I got to say, Mr. Strong," he said, "is that you got a good dryad watching over you." And then: "Come down, man. Come down. I want to shake your hand!"

It got through to Strong finally that he *could* go down; that his work, except for the base-cut, was finished.

He pulled up his dangling tree-peg, re-drove it, and "burned" down the saddle-rope in fifty foot spurts. He cut the last spurt short, slipped out of the seat, and leaped the final few feet to the ground.

The sun was at meridian. He had been in the tree three and one half days.

Wright came up and shook his hand. So did Suhre. At length he became aware that he was shaking hands with a third party. The mayor had returned, bringing special plates for everybody this time a plus a set of collapsible tables and chairs.

"We'll never forget you, my boy," he was saying, his dew-lapped jaws jiggling. "We'll never forget you! I called a special meeting of the board last night on your behalf, and we voted unanimously to erect a statue of you in the square after the stump had been burned out. We're going to inscribe the words, 'The Man Who Saved Our Beloved Village' at its base. Quite a heroic inscription, don't you think? But it's no more than you deserve. However, today—tonight, I want to express my gratitude in a more tangible way: I want you—and your friends, too, of course—to be my guests at the hotel. Everything will be on the house."

Suhre said: "I've been waiting to hear those words!" Wright said: "We'll be there." Strong didn't say anything. Finally the mayor released his hand, and the four of them sat down to dinner. Steaks brought all the way from the southern hemisphere; mushrooms imported from Omicron Ceti 14; tossed salad; green peas; fresh bread; apricot pie; coffee.

Strong forced the food down. He had no appetite. What he really wanted was a drink. Many drinks. But it was too soon. He

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still had one more cut to go. Then he could drink. Then he could help Blueskies drown the buffalo. On the house. "The Man Who Saved Our Beloved Village." Fill her up, bartender. Fill her up again. *I did not wear my scarlet cloak,* bartender. *For blood and wine are red,* bartender. *And blood and wine were on my hands when they found me with the dead, the poor dead woman whom I loved and murdered in her bed . . .*

The mayor had an excellent appetite. His beloved village was safe now. Now he could sit by his fire and count his credits in peace. He wouldn't have to worry any more about the tree. Strong felt like the little Dutch boy who had thrust his hand in the hole in the dike and saved the burghers' houses from the sea.

He was glad when the meal was over, glad when Wright leaned back in his chair. "What do you say, Mr. Strong?"

"I say let's get it over with, Mr. Wright."

They got up. The mayor took his table and chairs, climbed in his gyro-car and joined the other colonists beyond the danger area. The village sparkled in the sunlight. The streets looked as though they had just been scrubbed, and the houses, with their elaborate décor, looked like gingerbread fresh from the oven. Strong stopped feeling like the little Dutch boy and started to feel like Jack the Giant-Killer. It was time to chop down the bean-stalk.

He took up his position at the base of the trunk and began the notch. Wright and Suhre stood just behind him. He cut the notch carefully so that the trunk could not fail to fall in the direction Wright had designated. He cut it deep and true, and when he finished he knew the trunk would obey him. He walked around to its opposite side, Wright and Suhre following. No one spoke. It felt strange to be walking on solid ground. He kept expecting to feel the tug of the saddle-seat against his buttocks, the drag of the limb-line on his belt. The tips of his boots were red, he noticed. Red from the "blood"-drenched grass.

He took up his final position and raised his cutter. He squeezed the trigger. *The coward does it with a kiss,* he thought, *the treeman with a sword.* A slit appeared in the fissured trunk. Its edges began to redden. *The most modern of swords, manufactured in New America, Venus, and guaranteed never to become dull—*

Never to show mercy.

"Blood" ran down the bark, discoloring the grass. The invisible blade of the cutter swung back and forth and back and forth. The two hundred foot stub that once had been a tall proud tree shuddered. Slowly it began its passage to the ground.

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There was the prolonged swishing sound of the descent; the thick and thunderous sound of the descent's end; the quick brief trembling of the earth . . .

The surface of the massive stump grew bright red in the sunlight. Strong let the cutter fall to the ground. He circled the stump, stumbling now and then, till he came to the building-high length of the fallen stub. It had dropped just as he had wanted it to, its uppermost section landing neatly between two of the rows of houses. But he did not care about the houses any more. He had never cared about them really. He continued walking, gazing steadfastly at the ground. He found her presently, near the edge of the square. He had known he would find her if he looked hard enough. She was sunlight and meadow flower, a transient pattern of grass. He could not see all of her—only her waist and breasts and arms and lovely dying face. The rest of her was crushed beneath the stub: her hips, her legs; her small, leaf-sandaled feet—

"Forgive me," he said, and saw her smile and nod her head, and saw her die; and the grass come back, and the meadow flower, and the sun.

Epilogue

The man who had saved the beloved village placed his elbows on the bar that had once been an altar, in the hotel that had once been a church. "We've come to drown the buffalo, mayor," he said.

The mayor, who in honor of the occasion had taken over the duties of bartender, frowned.

"He means," Wright said, "that we'd like a round of drinks."

The mayor beamed. "May I recommend," he said, "our finest Martian bourbon, distilled from the choicest maize of the *Mare Erythraeum*?"

"Bring it forth from your cobwebbed crypt and we'll try it," Strong said.

"It's an excellent bourbon," Blueskies said, "but it won't drown buffalo. I've been on it all afternoon."

"You and your damned buffalo!" Suhre said.

The mayor set glasses before Wright and Strong and Suhre, and filled them from a golden bottle. "My glass is empty also," Blueskies said, and the mayor filled his, too.

The townfolk, out of deference, let the treemen have the bar to themselves. However, all the tables were occupied, and every so often one of the colonists would stand up and propose a toast, to Strong in particular, or to the treemen in general, and all of them—men and women alike—would stand up and cheer and empty their glasses.

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"I wish they'd go home," Strong said. "I wish they'd leave me alone."

"They can't leave you alone," Wright said. "You're their new culture-god."

"Another bourbon, Mr. Strong?" the mayor asked.

"Many more," Strong said. "To drug the memory of this insolence—' "

"What insolence, Mr. Strong?"

"Yours for one, you little earthman, you. You fat contemptible little earthman!"

"You could see them coming out of the horizon beneath the cloud of the dust their hooves threw up," Blueskies said, "and they were beautiful in their shaggy majesty and as dark and magnificent as death."

"Take us the earthmen," Strong said, "the fat little earthmen, that spoil the vineyard; for our vineyards are in blossom—"

"Tom!" Wright said.

"May I take this opportunity to tender my resignation, Mr. Wright? I shall never murder another tree. I am finished with your putrescent profession!"

"Why, Tom?"

Strong did not answer. He looked down at his hands. Some of his bourbon had spilled on the bar and his fingers were wet and sticky. He raised his eyes to the backbar. The backbar was the rear wall of the reconverted native church and contained a number of exquisitely carved niches formerly used to display religious articles. The niches contained bottles of wine and whiskey now—all save one. That one contained a little doll.

Strong felt a throbbing in his temples. He pointed to the niche. "What—what kind of a doll is that, mayor?"

The mayor faced the backbar. "Oh, that. It's one of the carved figurines which the early natives used to keep over their hearths to protect their houses." He took the figurine out of the niche, carried it over to where Strong was standing, and set it on the bar. "Remarkable workmanship, don't you think, Mr. Strong? . . . Mr. Strong?"

Strong was staring at the figurine—at its graceful arms and long slim legs; at its small breasts and slender throat; at its pixy-face and yellow hair; at the green garment of delicately carved leaves adorning it.

"The correct term is 'fetish,' I believe," the mayor went on. "It was made in the image of their principal goddess. From the little we know of them, it appears that the early natives believed in her so fanatically that some of them even claimed to have seen her."

"In the tree?"

"Sometimes."

Strong reached out and touched the figurine. He picked it up tenderly. Its base was wet

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from the liquor he had spilled on the bar. "Then—then she must have been the Goddess of the Tree."

"Oh, no, Mr. Strong. She was the Goddess of the Hearth. The Home. The Advance Team was wrong in assuming that the trees were religious symbols. We've lived here long enough to understand how the natives really felt. It was their houses that they worshipped, not the trees."

"Goddess of the Hearth?" Strong said. "The Home? . . . Then what was she doing in the tree?"

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Strong?"

"In the tree. I saw her in the tree."

"You're joking, Mr. Strong!"

"The hell I'm joking! She *was* the tree!" Strong brought his fist down on the bar as hard as he could. "She *was* the tree and I killed her!"

"Get hold of yourself, Tom," Wright said. "Everybody's staring at you."

"I killed her inch by inch, foot by foot. I cut her down arm by arm, leg by leg. I *murdered* her!" Strong paused. Something was wrong. Something that should have happened had failed to happen. Then he saw the mayor staring at his fist and he realized what the wrongness was.

When his fist had struck the bar, he should have felt pain. He had not. He saw why: his fist had not rebounded from the wood—it had sunk into the wood. It was as though the wood were rotten.

He raised his fist slowly. A decayed smell arose from the ragged dent it had made. The wood *was* rotten.

Goddess of the Hearth. The Home. The Village.

He swung away from the bar and made his way across the table-crowded floor to the street-wall. He threw his fist as hard as he could at the polished, exquisitely grained wood.

His fist went through the wall.

He gripped the lower edge of the hole he had made, and pulled. A whole section of the wall broke free, fell to the floor. The stench of decay filled the room.

The colonists were watching with horrified eyes. Strong faced them. "Your whole hotel is rotting away," he said. "Your whole goddam village!"

He began to laugh. Wright came over and slapped his face. "Snap out of it, Tom!"

His laughter died. He took a deep breath, expelled it. "But don't you see it, Wright? The tree? The village? What does a species of tree capable of growing to that size need to perpetuate its growth and to maintain itself after it has attained its growth? Nourishment. Tons and tons of nourishment. And what kind of soil! Soil enriched by the

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wastes and the dead bodies, and irrigated by the artificial lakes and reservoirs that only a large community of human beings can provide.

"So what does such species of tree do? Over a period of centuries, maybe even millenia, it learns how to lure human beings to its side. How? By growing houses. That's right. By growing houses right out of its roots, lovely houses that human beings can't resist living in. You see it now, don't you, Wright? You see now, don't you, why the crude sap carried more nutrients than the tree needed, why the elaborated sap was so rich in oxygen and carbohydrates. The tree was trying to sustain more than just itself; it was trying to sustain the village, too. But it couldn't any longer—thanks to the eternal selfishness and the eternal stupidity of man."

Wright looked stunned. Strong took his arm and they walked back to the bar together. The faces of the colonists were like gray clay. The mayor was still staring at the ragged dent in the bar. "Aren't you going to buy the man who saved your beloved village another drink?" Strong asked.

The mayor did not move.

Wright said: "The ancients must have known about the ecological balance—and converted their knowledge to superstition. And it was the superstition, not the knowledge, that got handed down from generation to generation. When the race matured they did the same thing all races do when they grow up too fast: they completely disregarded superstition. And when they eventually learned how to use metals, they built sewage disposal systems and incinerators and crematories. They spurned whatever systems the trees had provided and they turned the ancient burial grounds at the trees' bases into community squares. They upset the ecological balance."

Strong said: "Without knowing it. And when they finally found out, it was too late to restore it. The trees had already begun to die, and when the first tree *did* die and the first village started to rot away, they were appalled. Probably the love of their houses had been inbred in them so strongly that without their houses they were lost. And apparently they couldn't even bear to see their houses die. That's why they migrated to the northern barrens. That's why they either starved or froze to death in the death-caves, or committed mass-suicide . . ."

Blueskies said: "Fifty million of them there were, the great, shaggy, magnificent beasts, dwelling on the fertile plains where now the Great North American Desert lies. And the grass that sustained them was green, and they returned the grass to the earth in

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their dung, and the grass grew green again. Fifty million! And when the white men finished the slaughter, five hundred remained."

Wright said: "This must have been one of the last villages to go 'modern.' Even so, the tree must have been dying for years before the colonists came. That's why the village is rotting away so fast now."

Strong said: "The tree's death accelerated the deterioration-process. There probably won't be a house standing in another month . . . But the tree might have lived another hundred years if they hadn't been so anxious to preserve their damned real estate. It takes a long time for a tree the size of that one to die . . . And the color of the sap—I think I understand that now, too. Our consciences provided the pigment . . . In a way, though, I think she . . . I think it wanted to die."

Wright said: "The colonists will still exploit the land. But they'll have to live in mud huts while they're doing it."

Strong said: "Perhaps I performed an act of mercy—"

Suhre said: "What're you two talking about?"

Blueskies said: "Fifty million of them. *Fifty Million!*"

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Genus Egghead, our Science man reports, in a general way can be subdivided into species humanist and species scientist, and the relationship between them today is not unlike a past relationship between the Union and the Confederacy.

BATTLE OF THE EGGHEADS

by Isaac Asimov

THE THEORY IS THAT I HAVE *carte blanche* in this department to discuss anything of a scientific nature that I think will interest the readers of *F&SF* (with our kindly editor sitting anxiously in the wings hoping against hope that I don't go off my nut).

Well, what could be more important in science at the moment than the attitude of Americans, generally, to science? So I will now proceed to comment further on a subject I dealt with once before in an article entitled "The By-Product of Science Fiction."

This article first appeared in "Chemical and Engineering News," in the August 13, 1956 issue. It was subsequently reprinted in various places, including *F&SF* (April, 1957).

Now I have always been pleased with that article. In it, I viewed with alarm those factors in American culture which seemed to me to be equating lack of education with virtue, and to be making it difficult for young people to reveal intelligence without finding themselves penalized for it.

I said all this without mentioning missiles or satellites, without any talk of a "scientific race" with any nation. In fact, I never mentioned the Soviet Union at all. I said it all one and a half years before Sputnik I, and before the flood of Monday-morning quarterbacks, wise after the event, that followed hard upon Sputnik I's launching.

Of course, I must hastily disavow any intention of trying to imply that I'm smarter or more prescient than the next fellow. I

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did not forsee Sputnik I. An astronomer I know warned me in the spring of 1957 that the Soviet Union might beat us to the punch, and I laughed heartily and confidently. "Never," I said.

But that only means I never thought intelligence was important solely because we had to keep ahead of the Soviet Union. I thought intelligence was important for various other good and sufficient reasons, and sounded the trumpets on its behalf even when I was convinced that the United States was safely ahead of all comers in all branches of science.

So, after I recovered from my amazement that October day, I sat back to marvel at the sudden prestige brains had fallen heir to; and to wonder at the spectacle of congressmen discussing spaceflight learnedly, just as if they had been reading science fiction ever since they kissed their first baby. For a while, it seemed to me that brains had grown so respectable that I could detect congressmen trying to speak grammatically, even though that meant losing rough-hewn backwoods virtue.

In those days everyone talked about revising our system of education, and about introducing the revolutionary system of actually encouraging the brighter schoolboys, and paying them some attention.

But the initial panic subsided. We sent up satellites of our own, including a large one that talked, and now, as I write, we've just sent Pioneer IV chasing after Mechta. Yankee know-how is a little firmer in the saddle once more, and that leaves room for the thought that after all, better schools cost money and who can afford to throw money away by paying teachers full-scale janitorial-type salaries.

What's more, something else has been added on top of the returning complacency and the sober attractions of penny-wise, pound-foolish thrift. Complacency and false economy, after all, are to be expected, and anyone who is surprised by either had better turn in his sense of cynicism for a sharper-edged model.

The "something else" that is the game, however, is a definite counterattack against any changes in our basic educational philosophy and against the whole notion of increasing emphasis on science. What's more, this particular counterattack is led by "eggheads."

After all there are "eggheads" and "eggheads," in a variety of genera and species. We could make one broad classification and divide them up into the humanists and the scientists. (Which does not mean, of course, that one man can't be a member of both groups.)

There is snobbery among the educated; there always has been.

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As long ago as the time of ancient Greece, the great philosophers felt quite certain that to investigate nature by deep and abstract thought was far superior to, and nobler than, investigation by experimentation. They felt that to delight in the beauty of the ordered universe out of a pure appreciation of the esthetic, was superior to an interest grounded in a desire to apply the laws of the universe to the uses of every-day living.

Perhaps this was because Greece was a society founded on human slavery, so that there grew to be something disgraceful about manual labor. Experimentation, after all, was a kind of manual labor and therefore really fit only for slaves. Applied science meant bending the glories of the universe to those things that should interest slaves. The very expression "liberal arts" comes from the Latin "liberi" meaning "free men." The liberal arts were suitable for free men; the mechanical and technical arts for slaves.

A great thinker such as Archimedes, who couldn't resist working in applied science (and doing it superlatively well, too), was nevertheless ashamed of himself, and would publish only his theoretical work.

So experimental science had to wait two thousand years to be born.

And the attitude persists today among experimental scientists. The more theoretical a science, the higher it is in the scientists' social scale. The descending hierarchy of science is: mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology and sociology. Within each discipline, there are subdivisions that can be similarly treated on the basis of theoretical content. Within chemistry, for instance, the descending hierarchy is: physical chemist, organic chemist, biochemist, chemical engineer.

It is interesting that the various major disciplines of science developed their modern contents in order of their position in the hierarchy, as though it took longer and longer for thinkers to break further and further from the Greek ideal.

Modern sociology did not really come into its own until the Twentieth Century (and perhaps even yet hasn't really got off the ground). Modern biology—including the cell theory, the germ theory of disease, and the theory of evolution by natural selection—is a Nineteenth Century creation. Modern chemistry is the creature of Lavoisier and the Eighteenth Century; modern physics of Galileo and the Seventeenth Century. Modern astronomy dates back to Copernicus and the Sixteenth Century.

Mathematics, finally, is so highly theoretical that the Greeks condescended to invent it in the mod-

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dern sense. Furthermore, it did not entirely die in the centuries of darkness after. And by the Fifteenth Century, mathematics began to show unmistakable signs of a renewed vitality that has never flagged.

But what lies beyond mathematics and the Fifteenth Century? What most high of modern life came into being in the Fourteenth Century? Answer: the humanities.

Practitioners of all the sciences alike feel (consciously or not) that they are culturally inferior to those who specialize in the humanities. The humanists balance this situation by feeling smugly superior to the scientists, and because in the very nature of the case the humanists are extremely articulate, they have sold this attitude to the public generally.

When any of us think of culture, we think of literature, art, music, philosophy, Latin, Greek—"things like that." And, in fact, so untouchable have "things like that" become, that in beginning an article intended to be iconoclastic about them, I almost felt as though I were about to denounce motherlove, or refuse to salute the flag.

Now what are the "humanities" anyway? Webster says: "The branches of polite learning regarded as primarily conducive to culture: especially the ancient classics and belles-lettres; sometimes, secular, as distinguished from theological, learning."

The first part of the definition makes it seem obvious that the humanities are a type of "pure" learning not readily applied to the every-day problem of making a living. It is an ideal study for leisure time and for those people who have leisure time.

And it is only human to fall into the fallacy that if "a" implies "b," then "b" must imply "a." If the best examples of the humanities have no practical application; then studies without practical application are good examples of the humanities; and, conversely, a study *with* a practical application is *not* a good example of the humanities—it is not a type of polite learning, it is not conducive to culture.

Now the various sciences can't avoid having practical uses. The sciences start with gentlemen amateurs but invariably end with someone in a laboratory somewhere getting himself all dirty.

Who, therefore, would argue that the immensely learned gentleman with the vast world of the humanities at his finger-tips, but with no knowledge of science, was not far more cultured than the laboratory worker with detailed knowledge of the sciences but unable to differentiate between a Picasso and a pizzicato?

For instance, there is a story that the faculty of the Massachu-

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setts Institute of Technology once met to go over the final grades of the graduating class. It turned out that a student named Cicero had flunked Latin. There was general laughter in which all, without exception, joined.

Who did not know, whatever his specialty, that Marcus Tullius Cicero was the greatest of the Roman orators and the writer of the purest specimens of Latin style ever committed to paper? Not to know that was to be uneducated and boorish. The physicist, as well as the classicist, would have been ashamed not to know.

There then followed, at this same faculty meeting, the case of another student, named Gauss, who had flunked mathematics. Again there was laughter, but now only the members of the various science departments laughed. The humanities boys maintained an uncomprehending silence.

They did not know that Karl Friedrich Gauss was one of the three or four greatest mathematicians of history. And if that were explained to them, they undoubtedly didn't see why they should be expected to know and probably didn't care that they didn't know, and had every intention of not knowing the next time, either.

After all, any scientist would be ashamed to look up from his instruments and say, "I don't dig this fancy literature jazz. I just read comic books." It might be true, mind you, but he would be ashamed to say so. He would feel disgraced.

However, I can easily imagine a humanist stating quite calmly that he knew nothing about mathematics and that he couldn't add a column of figures to save his life. There's no disgrace in *that.* In fact, I have a suspicion that a thorough-going humanist would feel just a little proud of not understanding mathematics or science. It would be a sign of true intellectual aristocracy. It would show how *completely* cultured he was.

So now consider the situation in which the humanists found themselves unexpectedly involved after that black October day in 1957. The American public and its spokesmen were suddenly howling for more education, but it was *science* education they were speaking of. Eminent leaders in all walks of life suddenly discovered that our youngsters weren't being taught enough—*science,* that is.

Imagine the possible future that faced the thoroughly cultivated humanist. Would the time come when a man was to be considered educated simply because he understood differential equations, Lord save us? Was a chemist, with his acid-stained fingers and his

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stinks, to be looked up to as a cultured individual, *ipso facto*?

And what would happen to a man, a *really* cultured man, who had read Proust in the original French and Dostoievsky in the original Russian (Czarist Russian, of course), but who had never quite sullied himself with calculus and protons and things like that. Was he to be a mere layman? Was he to be a person with a second-class education?

Naturally, many humanists were against any such development; the fellow with the buggy-whip factory was as naturally against Henry Ford. The result has been many learned counter-attacks against "overemphasis" on science, some of which I find more sickening than others.

One point I often hear made is that we are allowing the Soviet Union's successes in the missile field to drive us into vulgar competition with an evil, materialistic society in turning out scientists and engineers; that we should instead follow our own more spiritual way of life; that we should not try to defeat a hellish system by adopting the vile features of the very thing we are fighting.

To me, it is foolish and hypocritical for us to pose as being too proud to compete with the Soviet Union on a material basis. It wasn't many years ago when it was loudly stated that all we had to do was to drop Sears, Roebuck catalogs all over the Soviet Union —that the suppressed population, learning of the vast wealth and riches made possible by an enlightened capitalistic system, would then rise in rebellion.

We have argued our superiority over communism again and again by simply comparing numbers of automobiles, telephones, washing-machines, and such. Anyone watching television knows that our economy is dependent on continually increasing the numbers of our material possessions, and that all imaginable legal techniques are used to encourage this. If some method were discovered to enable an announcer to emerge from the set and shove his detergent or headache powder or cakemix or automobile down our throats at the point of a gun, sponsors would undoubtedly stand in a double line extending to the horizon waiting their turn to take advantage of it.

Now, after forty years of listening to our talk, the Soviet Union suddenly brightens up and says, "All right, we'll beat you out in standard of living, and let's begin right now by measuring who is superior in terms of numbers of missiles and scientists." If, in response, all we can do is to mutter that oh, well, it's the spiritual values that count after all, I can only say that this conversion is too late to be convincing, and

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we're going to lose that celebrated fight for the minds of men.

Then, too, I am horrified at the grisly line of reasoning that tends to make it look as if educating more scientists is equivalent to adopting the communist line. To equate science with communism strikes me as plain suicide for any non-communist society; and, frankly, if to be in favor of more and better science and scientists is to be communistic, I might as well turn in my democracy-loving self right now.

What's more, talk about "competing with the Soviet Union" misses the point anyway; misses it so badly that I am appalled at the naiveté of it all. Suppose the Soviet Union were to be converted to Jeffersonian Democracy tomorrow, or to pure Christianity; or better yet (since we wouldn't trust them anyhow, I imagine) suppose the Soviet Union with its entire population were to vanish this instant from the earth.

Do you suppose there would then no longer be any need for science or scientists, that we could all sit back and listen to a Brahms concerto or an Elvis Presley record (according to taste) and leave science to the few queers and oddballs who have an ingrained unstoppable interest in it?

Not on your set of the great works of literature through the ages.

We have an enemy worth ten times the Soviet Union, called "exploding population." We've got another one, equally formidable, called "declining natural resources." And we have developed a world population consisting of people who have either attained a high standard of living and want more of the same, or who have not yet attained a high standard of living and are determined to do so.

These are dead horses to the readers of this magazine; I won't beat them here, but I wish to point out that if we expect to make an easier life for more people out of what's left of a plundered planet, we're going to have to look for ways of doing it. Belles-lettres may inspire us in this search, but the actual answers, if any, will have to come out of the scientific disciplines.

We'll need scientists and engineers for more than missiles and satellites. We'll need them for such things, such simple everyday things, as finding sufficient food, pure water and uncontaminated air.

In fact, our need of scientists would be more certain if the Soviet Union did disappear, because while the Soviet Union exists, there is always a possibility of a full-scale nuclear war, which would eliminate the need of science by largely eliminating us.

To be sure, it can be pointed

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out that many modern-day problems would not exist were it not for science. The danger of nuclear war is the best example. Then, too, the advance of modern medicine has been one factor behind the present population explosion; and, as an example of a minor item, it appears to be automobile exhaust that creates smog.

However, science did not invent the problem of having problems. Problems existed plentifully in the days of non-science—non-scientific societies were far more miserable than our own in many respects, and had far less hope of relief. The ideal civilization of the humanist, Periclean Athens, was founded on human slavery and lasted one generation, being then destroyed by war (that was chronic in those times and certainly not caused by science) and plague (that was also chronic and *was* caused by *non*-science . . .)

I think that anyone who yearns for some simpler healthy pastoral society, some primitive, clean and virtuous patriarchal culture away from the madness of modern life, yearns for something that never was.

It may be crassly materialist of me, but I get a warm feeling of comfort and security when I think of such things as anesthetics and antibiotics and soap and interior plumbing and a million other things that Daphnis and Chloe did not have as they piped interminable pipings to their gambolling lambs. And what do you suppose happened to lads like Daphnis anyway if they came down with an attack of acute appendicitis. They didn't scream forever, of course; only till they went into a coma and died.

Another fear frequently expressed in connection with possible "overemphasis" on science, is that we might turn out a nation of scientific robots; that it is important, after all, to turn out "well-rounded" men.

This is ignorance, which is bad; or hypocrisy, which is worse. It consists of raising the specter of a horrible danger that does not and cannot exist. Let's suppose that the American people *want* to turn out a nation of expert scientists, that American education has accepted the challenge and goes honestly to work toward that goal. Will it succeed? Of course not.

The large majority of the human race are no more equipped to be expert scientists than they are equipped to be star baseball players. With the best will in the world we could turn only a minority of even the gifted portion of humanity into high-class probers into the secrets of Nature.

The term "scientific robot", which is used frequently by humanists, is an unjustified piece of intellectual snobbery, in which the humanist joins with the gen-

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erally uneducated in accepting a false stereotype of the scientist as someone who is lost in his test-tubes and oscilloscopes and is incapable of appreciating the finer things of life.

Despite a wide acquaintanceship in the field, I know very few scientists who are lost in either test-tubes or oscilloscopes. Most have outside interests; among other things, in the humanities. Most believe that a man is a better scientist for being interested in the humanities, and act on that belief. As it happens, I *do* know someone who has read Proust in the original French and Dostoievsky in the original Russian. He is a biochemist.

Still another great worry about concentrated science-teaching is this: Suppose you *do* decide on a great and continuing drive to find and develop students who are capable of scientific work. Suppose you concentrate on making those students scientists. Are you not then destroying the students' right to lead his own life, choose his own interests? Suppose a student who can be a scientist doesn't wish to be a scientist? Is not making him one anyway anti-democratic? Is it not dictatorial? Is it not interfering with the human dignity and individuality that the western world has struggled so hard to preserve?

The answer is yes, to every one of those questions, and if a student is dead set against being a scientist, he can't be made into one, no matter how qualified he is otherwise. The only thing is that we had better make sure that he *is* dead set against being one—and offer him every inducement to exploit his special talents.

I remember the naive, dreamy days before Pearl Harbor when there arose the question of establishing a draft. Some great mind in the halls of Congress rose to say that a draft was unnecessary because at the first hint of invasion, a million Americans, like the good old Minute-men of old, would spring to arms.

Sure, they would!

The Minute-men of old grabbed their long squirrel-rifles off the wall and went out to shoot at Redcoats who didn't have any gun they could handle half as well. And the American of 1941, presumably, would grab his tank and airplane off the wall and do the same.

Fortunately, by the spanking majority of one, our leaders in the House of Representatives dimly made out the fact that modern weapons can't be handled at first sight; that there's more to war these days than pulling a trigger. So the draft went into action, and when war came we needed only an additional six months to get ready.

The army draft is dictatorial

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and destroys individuality—no one asks the recruit if he would rather be a private or a rich war-worker. But the draft proved to be necessary after all, even in a democracy.

Actually, we are at war now—not with the Soviet Union, but with the universe. We always have been. Human progress—or what we define as progress—came about as the result of victories over the universe. There was the discovery of fire, the invention of the wheel, the development of metallurgy, the taming of the horse.

After 1500, an organized method of fighting the universe was invented and called experimental science. After 1750, that method went into high gear. Until 1950, however, the war against the universe was still so small-scale as to be carried out with reasonable efficiency by a volunteer army.

That's no longer the case. Increasing population, plus the intense scale of energy expenditure made possible by earlier victories, has made the battle steadily more involved and the risk of disaster in case of defeat (even temporary defeat) steadily greater.

A volunteer army is no longer enough. We need a draft in the form of a revised and improved educational system; we need the assurance that every man who is equipped to be a scientist, both intellectually and psychologically, become one. We must make certain that no budding scientist be lost to humanity for trivial reasons.

To put it bluntly, I would also like to see an end to dilettantism in matters of the intellect. The Greek exaltation of art for art's sake is fine as long as it isn't interpreted to mean that art for the good of mankind is ignoble.

I say, let's consider the second part of the Webster definition of the humanities, which reads: ". . . secular, as distinguished from theological, learning."

The humanities, in the modern sense, were invented during the Renaissance. At that time, when European education had long been centered about theology, Italian scholars rediscovered the secular literature of Greece and Rome—a literature that concerned itself not with Heaven and Hell but with the things of this earth. The ancients had a view of life that dealt with man and his relations with man, and this was ravishingly novel to a culture that had concerned itself for a thousand years with God and His relation to man.

So the scholars of the Renaissance became concerned with "humanity" rather than with "divinity;" and in consequence they called their studies "the humanities." The humanities concerned themselves first with "the ancient classics" (as Webster says), and with the imitative literature, or

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"belles-lettres," which the humanists themselves wrote.

But because that is the way it started doesn't mean that that is the way it must end.

The humanities are secular learning; they are the study of that which concerns men, and in the centuries that have progressed since the Renaissance, new things have come to concern men. Are the new things to be forever unrepresented? Modern science is a creature of the post-Renaissance, but because Francesco Petrarca knew nothing of it, is that a reason we must know nothing of it, either?

In the modern world, science plays an intimate role in all aspects of man's life. From top to bottom, from mind to belly, we live surrounded by and permeated with science and the objects that are the products of science. It is impossible any longer to divorce man from science or science from man, without unimaginable catastrophe.

Therefore, the man who calls himself a humanist but remains ignorant of science, is not really a humanist, because he has, more or less deliberately, cut himself off from one of modern humanity's most important concerns.

This does not mean a humanist must today be a professional scientist. Of course not. Neither is he expected to be a great novelist or to compose a sonata or to turn out a still-life sketch. He is expected, however, to know something about literature, music and art, and to appreciate them. He should also be expected to understand something about science and appreciate that.

If that attitude came to pass, we could develop a new group of twentieth-century humanists, men who could forsake quattrocento outlooks and prejudices and join the rest of us way up here six centuries later. With his new outlook, the humanist may then not be so unreasonably frightened at our modern need to intensify science-education and perhaps then, marching forward under the emblem "egg-heads united," we can continue to gain in the never-ending battle against the Universe.

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*Pigging it one day with Avram Davidson, over an adequate pheasant-under-glass and a goodish chablis, we casually brought up a minor point in this tale of an author who encounters an unearthly, and regrettably opinionated, group of his readers. "You don't," we asked, "*really *feel that way about publishers, do you?" "Not* all *of them," he replied—a bit shiftily, we thought. And while we assume that "Author, Author" is pure fiction, we note that our publisher has been looking a bit peaky lately, and has taken to staying in town of weekends. . . .*

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

by Avram Davidson

RODNEY STIRRUP HAD ALWAYS TAKEN care (taken *damned good* care! he often emphasized) not to get married; several former morganatic lady friends, however, frequently testified that the famous writer was Not A Very Nice Person. Perhaps even they might have felt sorry for him if they could have been with him that day at Boatwright Brothers, the publishers. And thereafter.

But then again, perhaps they might not. . . .

Rodney stared at J.B. across the vast, glossy desk.

"With one hand you cut my throat," he protested; "and with the other hand you stab me in the back!"

A slightly pained look passed across Jeremy Boatwright's pink and wide-spread face, hesitated, and decided to stay. "Come now, Rodney . . . these professional phrases . . . Really, there are no other choices left to us, owing, ah, to Conditions In The Trade—"

Stirrup confounded conditions in the trade. "You reduce my royalties—I call that cutting my throat. And you demand a larger share in the secondary rights: reprints, paperbacks, television—I call that stabbing me in the back. If this continues, I won't be able to keep my car. It is bad enough," he said, bitterly, "that I am confined to London in the winter. I *always* went to the South of

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France, the West Indies—or, at *least*, to Torquay. Next winter I shall not only shiver and cough in the damp, but I won't even be able to drive away for a weekend. I'll have to go by train or bus—if you are good enough to leave me my fare. . . . You aren't giving up *your* car, are you?" he asked.

J. B. leaned his well-tailored elbows on the desk, bent forward. "Confidentially, old man—it's my wife's money that pays for it." Stirrup asked if it wasn't true that Mrs. Boatwright's income was derived in large part from her stock in the publishing film. J.B.'s face went stiff. "Let's leave Mrs. Boatwright out of this, shall we?" he proposed.

"But—"

"Why don't you mix yourself a drink? Sobriety always makes you surly."

Stirrup said he supposed he might as well. "It's my books that are paying for your booze," he observed gloomily.

"Look here—" the publisher flung out his plump hand. "You seem to think this is a special plot to defraud our writers. Do you?" Rodney shrugged. "Oh, my dear fellow!" Boatwright's voice was pained—pleading. "Do let me explain it to you. It is true that Rodney Stirrup—whom I have known from the days when he was still Ebenezer Quimby—" (the writer shuddered) "—is one of the world's top-ranking writers of the classical detection story. But what good's it do a man to be one of the world's top-ranking designers of carriage-whips if no one is buying carriages? Have you *seen* the paperbacks coming out these days? Sex and slaughter." He tittered.

Stirrup angrily put down his drink. He suspected, strongly, that the bottle he'd poured it from was not the one proffered better-selling writers. "I can show you—you should have read them yourself, dammit—my latest review."

Jeremy Boatwright shrugged away the latest reviews. "The reviewer gets his copies free: *Our* only concern is with copies *sold*. Now, in the Past, old man," he made a church-roof of his well-manicured fingers, "your books sold chiefly, and sold (admittedly) very well, to the American circulating libraries. Now—alas—they are dying. Hundreds of them—thousands—are already dead. Dreadful pit-y. The people who used to take your books out now stay at home and watch television instead. Eh?" He glanced—none too subtly—at his watch.

"Then why don't you sell more of my things to television? Eh?"

Boatwright said, Oh, but they *tried*. "Sometimes we succeed. But in order to equalize our losses, we—Boatwright Brothers—simply have got to take a larger slice of

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your television and other secondary earnings. It's as simple as that."

Stirrup suggested that there was a simpler way: that Boatwright Brothers move to cheaper quarters, cut down on their plushy overhead and pass the savings on to their writers. J.B. smiled indulgently. "Oh, my dear fellow—how I wish we could. You've no idea how this place *bores* me—to say nothing of what dining out does to my poor liver. But we're not so lucky as you. A writer can pig it if he likes to, but we publishers, well, we simply are obliged to maintain the facade."

And, with a sigh, he changed the subject; began to explain to Stirrup why it was difficult nowadays to sell his writings. "You hit upon a good formula. A *very* good formula. But it's outmoded now. Almost all your stories begin the same way: a traveller's car breaks down on a lonely road across the moors, about dusk. Just over the rise is a large mansion, to which he is directed by a passing rustic. . . . Correct? Well, large mansions are out of date. No one can afford them. The rustics are all home smoking Woodbines in front of the telly while they fill in their football pools. . . . And another thing: Your books have too many butlers in them, and too many baronets. In actuality, butlers are dying off—mine died not long ago and we've found no replacement. As for baronets—they have all gone into the insurance business. Things have *changed,* dear boy, and your books have failed to change with them. In effect, you are writing ghost stories." He smiled moistly. "Must you go quite so soon?" he asked, as Stirrup continued to sit.

Stirrup put down the empty glass and began to draw on his gloves. "Yes—unless you were planning to invite me to luncheon."

Boatwright said, "I'd love to. Unfortunately I have a prior engagement with Marie-Noëmi Valerien and her mother. You know: fifteen year old French girl who wrote *Bon Soir, Jeunesse.* I understand she's finished another, and her publishers have treated her simply vilely, so— Where are you off to?"

"Out of town. Some old friends have a place in the country."

The publisher inquired if they lived in a large mansion. "As a matter of fact," the writer said, not meeting his eye, "the Big House is closed for the time being, and they are living in what used to be the gate-keeper's cottage. Very cosy little place," he said, bitterly, remembering Nice, Cannes, Antibes . . . "They raise poultry."

The publisher, Stirrup reflected bitterly, had no need to raise poultry at *his* country place—which was in the same county as his

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friends' run-down acreage. The Mill-Race (name, unknown to the local Topographical Society, bestowed by Boatwright in fancied honor of an all but vanished ruin beside an all but dried up stream) was both well-furnished and well kept. Once a year, Stirrup was invited down for the long weekend: no oftener. He felt no twinge at hearing of the demise of the butler, Bloor, a large, pear-shaped man with prominent and red-rimmed eyes who had always treated him with insultingly cold politeness—a treatment he repaid by never tipping the man.

Jeremy Boatwright magnanimously walked Stirrup to the door. "Have a *pleasant* weekend, old man. Perhaps taste will change; in the meanwhile, though, perhaps *you'll* consider changing. A psychological thriller about a couple who live in the gatekeeper's cottage and raise poultry—eh?"

Rodney Stirrup (he was a withered, short man, with a rufous nose) did think about it, and as a result, he lost his way. There are many people who dislike to ask directions, and Stirrup was one of them. He was certain that if he continued to circle around, he would find the needed landmarks and then be able to recognize the way from there. It grew late, then later, and he was willing to inquire, but there was no one in sight to ask.

And finally, just at dusk, his engine gave a reproachful cough and ceased to function. He had passed no cars and no people on this lonely side-road, but, still, he couldn't leave his car standing in the middle. It was small and light; steering and pushing, he got it off to the side.

"Damned Devil-wagon!" he said. Wasn't there a rule about lighting a red lantern and leaving it as a warning? Well, too bad, he had none. He looked around in the failing light, and almost—despite his vexation—almost smiled.

" 'A traveller's car breaks down on a lonely road about dusk. Just over a rise is a large mansion,' " he quoted. "Damn Boatwright anyway. 'Ghost-stories!' " He sighed, thrust his hands into his pockets and started walking. Ahead of him was a slight rise in the road. "If only there were someone I could ask directions of," he fretted. "Even 'a passing rustic.' A—"

A man in a smock came plodding slowly over the rise. In that first moment of relief mingled with surprise, Stirrup wondered if the thought had really preceded the sight. Or if—

"I say—can you tell me where I can find a telephone?" he called out, walking quickly towards the figure, who had halted open-mouthed, on seeing him. The rustic slowly shook his head.

"Televown?" he repeated, scratching his chin. "Nay, marster,

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ee wown't voind näo devil's devoice loike that erebäouts."

Stirrup's annoyance at the answer was mixed with surprise at the yokel's costume and dialect. When had he last heard or seen anything like it? Or—not heard or seen—read? If anyone had asked him, and found him in an honest mood, he should have said that such speech and garb had been nothing but literary conventions since the Education Acts had done their work. Why, he himself hadn't dared employ it since before the first World War. And the fellow didn't seem that old.

"Surely there must be a house somewhere along here—" Reaching the top of the rise, he looked about. "There! That one!" About a quarter-mile off, set back in grounds quickly being cloaked in coming night, was a large mansion.

The man in the smock seemed to shiver. "That gurt äouze? Ow, zur, däon't ee troy they'm. Ghowsties and bowgles . . ." His voice died away into a mumble, and when Stirrup turned to him again, he was gone. Some village idiot, perhaps, unschooled because unschoolable. Well, it didn't matter. The house—

At first glance the house had seemed a mere dark huddle, but now there were lights. He made his way quickly ahead. A footman answered his knock. Self-consciously, Stirrup spoke the words he had so often written. "I'm afraid my car has broken down. May I use your telephone?" The footman asked—of course—if he might take his hat and coat. Feeling very odd, Stirrup let him. Then another man appeared. He was stout and tall and silver-haired.

"Had a breakdown? Too bad!" Voices sounded and glasses clinked in the room he had quitted. It was warm. "My name is Blenkinsop," he said.

"Mine is Stirrup—Rodney Stirrup." He hem'd. Would Mr. Blenkinsop recognize?— Evidently Mr. Blankinsop did. He stared, eyes wide.

"Rod-ney *Stir*rup?" he cried. *"The writer?"* His voice was like thunder.

Another man appeared. He was thin, with small white side-whiskers: Lamb-, rather than mutton-chop. "My dear Blenkinsop, pray modulate your voice," he said. "Richards is telling a capital story . . . whom have we here?"

"This gentleman, my dear Arbuthnot," said Blenkinsop in clear and even tones, "is Mr. Rodney Stirrup. The wri-ter. He's come *here!*"

"No!"

"Yes!"

"Oh, ho-ho-ho!" Mr. Arbuthnot laughed.

"Ah, ha-ha-ha!" Mr. Blenkinsop laughed.

Stirrup, at first puzzled, now

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grew annoyed. Young men, the kind who wear fuzzy beards and duffle coats and read *avant garde* publications and live in attics or mews where they entertain amoral young women—*they* might understandably be moved to laugh at a writer of The Classical Detective Story; but there seemed no excuse at all for men older than himself, contemporaries of Hall Caine and Mrs. Belloc Lowndes and other all but forgotten literary figures, to laugh.

The two men stopped, looked at him, then at each other.

"I fear we must seem very boorish to you," Mr. Arbuthnot said. He looked very much like Gladstone, a picture of whom had hung in the home of Malachi Quimby, the Radical cobbler, Stirrup's long late father. Somewhat of the awe felt for father had transferred itself to the Grand Old Man; and now, even now, a remnant of it was left for Mr. Arbuthnot.

"Pray accept my apologies," Mr. Arbuthnot said.

"Oh, don't mention it."

"The fact is," explained Blenkinsop, "that we are all of us very great followers of your books, Mr. Stirrup. It is the coincidence of meeting, via a fortuitous accident, the author of our interest, which provoked our untimely risibility. Do excuse us."

Stirrup said that it was pleasant to realize that he was not forgotton.

"Oh, not here," said Arbuthnot. "Never . . . Pray come and meet our friends."

"Do," urged Blenkinsop, leading the way. "Oh, no, indeed, we've not forgotten you. We have a little celebration tonight. We often do . . . Right through this door, Mr. Stirrup."

The room to which they led him contained perhaps a dozen men, all distinguished in mien, all well on in years. They looked up as he entered. Glasses were in their hands, and cigars. Several of them were still chuckling, presumably at the "capital" story told by Richards, whichever one he was. A tall and heavy man with a nose like the Duke of Wellington's, sipped, and smacked lips.

"Excellent, my dear Richards," he said.

"I thought you'd like it, Peebels" Richards said. He was a red-faced, husky-voiced, many chinned man. "Whom have we here, Arbuthnot, Blenkinsop?"

Arbuthnot smiled on the right side of his face. Blenkinsop rubbed his hands. "This gentleman has had the ill-chance to suffer a breakdown of his motor-car. I am sure—quite sure—that we shall endeavor to welcome him in a fitting manner. He is no ordinary guest. He is a well-known author."

There was a stir of interest. "He writes thrillers." Another stir. "He is none other than—" a dramatic pause—"*Mr. Rodney Stirrup!*"

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The reaction was immense.

Three men jumped to their feet, one dropped a lit cigar, one snapped the stem of his wine-glass, another crashed his fist into his palm.

"I told Mr. Stirrup," Blenkinsop lifted his voice, the hum subsided, "that few writers, if any, have received the attention which we have given to the works through which his name became famous. We follow his tales of crime and detection very carefully here, I told him."

Peebles said, "You told him no more than the truth, Mr. Blenkinsop. Do us the honor, sir, of taking a glass of wine. This is a great occasion, indeed, Mr. Stirrup." He poured, proferred.

Stirrup drank. It was a good wine. He said so. The company smiled.

"We have kept a good cellar here, Mr. Stirrup," said Peebles. "It has been well attended to." Stirrup said that they must have a good butler, then. A good butler was hard to find, he said. Between the men there passed a look, a sort of spark. Mr. Peebles carefully put down his glass. It was empty. "How curious that you should mention butlers," he said.

Stirrup said that it was not so curious, that he was, in a way, very fond of butlers, that he had put them to good use in his books. Then he turned, surprised. A noise very like a growl had come from a corner of the room where stood a little man with a red face and bristly white hair.

"Ye-e-es," said Mr. Peebles, in a odd tone of voice. "It is generally conceded, is it not, that you, Mr. Stirrup, were the very first man to employ a butler as the one who stands revealed, at story's end, as the murderer? That it is you who coined the phrase which so rapidly became a household word wherever the English tongue is spoken? I refer, of course, to: *'The Butler Did It.'?"*

Rather proudly, fondly even, Stirrup nodded. "You are correct, sir."

"And in novel after novel, though the victims varied and the criminal methods changed, the murderer was almost invariably —a butler. Until finally you were paid the supreme compliment one writer can pay another—that of imitation. A line of thrillers long enough to reach from here to London—to say nothing of short stories, stage-plays, music hall turns, film and wireless dramas—each with a murderous butler, poured forth upon the world, Mr. Stirrup—beginning, if I am not mistaken, with Padraic, the butler of Ballydooly House, in *Murder By The Bogs."*

Stirrup was pleased. "Ah, do you remember Padraic? Dear me . . . yes, that was my very first detective novel. Couldn't do it today, of course: Irish butlers are dread-

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fully passé. Obsolete. De Valera and Irish Land Reform have extinguished the species, so to speak."

The red-faced little man dashed from his corner, seized a poker, and brandished it in Stirrup's face. "The truth is not in ye!" he shouted. "Ye lie, ye scribblng Sassenach!" Stirrup could not have said with any degree of accuracy if the brogue was that of Ulster, or Minster, or Leinster, or Connaught—the classical Four Provinces—but he recognized as being of sound British workmanship the heavy iron in the speaker's hand.

In a rather quavering tone, Stirrup demanded, "What is the meaning of this?"

"Allow me to introduce you," Peebles said, "to O'Donnell, for fifty years butler to Count Daniel Donavan of Castle Donavan. . . . O'Donnell, put that away."

Still growling, O'Donnell obeyed. Stirrup, regaining his aplomb, said: "*Count?* Surely not. The peerage of Ireland, like other British peerages, contains countesses, but no counts. The husband of a countess is an earl."

"The Count's toitle, sor," said O'Donnell, looking at him with an eye as cold and grey as Galway Bay in winter, "is a Papal toitle. Oi trust ye've no objections?"

Stirrup hastily said he had none, and retreated to the other side of a table. The man whose wineglass had snapped in his hand, finished wiping port from his fingers with a monogrammed handkerchief, spoke in mellowed, measured tones.

"We must, of course," he said, "make due allowances for Celtic—I do not say, West British—exuberance; but the matter now before us is too serious to permit any element of disorder to enter." There was a general murmur of agreement. "Gentlemen, I move that the doors be locked. Those in favor will signify by saying Aye. . . . The Ayes have it."

He locked the door and pocketed the key. "Thank you, Mr. Piggot," said Peebles.

"Mr. Arbuthnot," Stirrup said, loudly, "since I am here in response to your invitation it is from you that I must demand an explanation for these actions."

Arbuthnot smiled his slant smile again. Peebles said, All In Good Time. "By the way," he inquired, "I trust you have no objections if I refer to you henceforth as the Accused? Protocol, you know, protocol."

Stirrup said that he objected very much. "Most vehemently—of what am I accused?" he asked, plaintively.

Peebles flung out his arm and pointed at him. "You are accused, sir," he cried, "of having for over thirty years pursued an infamous campaign of literary slander designed to bring into contempt and disrepute a profession the most

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ancient and honorable, dating back to Biblical days and specifically mentioned—I refer to Pharoah's Chief Butler—in the Book of Deuteronomy."

Knuckles were rapped on tables and the room rang with murmurs of "Hear, hear!" and, "Oh, well said, sir!"

"Pardon me, Mr. Peebles," said Blenkinsop. "The Book of Genesis.

"Genesis? H'm, dear me, yes. You are correct. Thank you."

"Not at all, not at all. Deuteronomy is very much like Genesis."

Stirrup interrupted this feast of love. "I insist upon being informed what all this has to do with you, or with any of you, except O'Donnell."

Peebles peered at him with narrowed, heavy-lidded eyes.

"Are you under the impression, Mr.— Is Accused under the impression that our esteemed colleague, Mr. Phelim O'Donnell, is the only butler here?"

Stirrup locked dry lips with dry tongue. "Why, ah, yes," he stammered. "Isn't he? Is there another?" A growl went round the circle. It drew in closer.

"No, sir, he is *not*. *I* was a butler. *We were all of us butlers!*"

A hoarse scream broke from Stirrup's mouth. He lunged for the open windows, but was tripped up by the watchful Piggot.

Peebles frowned. "Mr. Blenkinsop," he said, "will you be good enough to close the windows. . . ? Thank you. I must now warn the Accused against any further such outbursts. Yes, Accused, we were all of us, every one of us, members of that proud profession which you, Accused, were the first to touch with the dusty brush of Scorn. Now you must prepare to pay. Somehow, somehow, Mr. Stirrup, you have pushed aside what my former lady—the justly-famed Mme. Victoria Algernonovna Grabledsky, the Theosophical authoress—used to denominate 'The Veil of Isis.' This room wherein you now stand is none other than the Great Pantry of the Butlers' Valhalla. Hence—"

"May it please the Court," said Piggot, interrupting. "We find the Accused Guilty As Charged, and move to proceed with sentencing."

"*Help!*" Stirrup cried, struggling in O'Donnell's iron grasp. "*He-e-e-l-l-p!*"

Peebles said that would do him no good, that there was no one to help him. Then he looked around the room, rather helplessly. "Dear me," he said, a petulant note in his voice; "Whatever shall I use for a black cap whilst I pronounce sentence?"

A silence fell, broken by Richards. "In what manner shall sentence be carried out?" he asked.

Piggot, his face bright, spoke up. "I must confess, Mr. Peebles, to a fondness for the sashweight attached by a thin steel wire to the works of a grandfather's clock. "As

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utilized (in the Accused's novel of detection, *Murder In The Fens*) by Murgatroyd, the butler at Fen House—who was, of course, really Sir Ethelred's scapegrace cousin, Percy, disguised by a wig and false paunch. I recall when I was in the service of Lord Alfred Strathmorgan, his Lordship read that meretricious work and thereafter was wont to prod me quite painfully in my abdominal region, and to inquire, with what I considered a misplaced jocularity, *if it were real!* . . . Yes, I favor the sashweight and the thin steel wire."

Peebles nodded, judiciously. "Your suggestion, Mr. Piggot, while by no means devoid of merit has a—shall I say—a certain degree of violence—which I should regret having to utilize, so long as an alternative—"

"I would like to ask the opinion of the gentlemen here assembled," said Blenkinsop, "as to what they would think of a swift-acting, exotic Indonesian poison which, being of vegetative origin, leaves no trace; to be introduced via a hollowed corkscrew into a bottle of Mouton Rothschild, '12? Needless to say, I refer to the Accused's trashy novel *The Vintage Vengeance*, in which the profligate Sir Athelny met his end at the hands of the Butler, Bludsoe, whose old father's long-established wine and spirits business was ruined when the avaricious Sir Athelny cornered the world's supply of corks—thus occasioning the elder Bludsoe's death by an apoplexy. The late Clemantina, Dowager Duchess of Sodor and Skye, who was quite fond of her glass of wine, used frequently to chaffer me by enquiring if I had opened her bottle with a corkscrew of similar design and purpose; and I am not loath to confess that this habit of Her Grace's annoyed me exceedingly."

"The Court can well sympathize with you in that, Mr. Blenkinsop." The Great Pantry hummed with a murmur of accord.

Blenkinsop swallowed his chagrin at this memory, nodded his thanks for the Court's sympathy, and then said, smoothly, "Of course we could not *force* the Accused to drink without rather a messy scene, but I have hopes he would feel enough sense of *noblesse oblige* to quaff the fatal beverage Socratic-like, so to speak."

Stirrup wiped his mouth with his free hand. "While I should be delighted, under ordinary circumstances," he said, "to drink a bottle of Mouton Rothschild, '12, I must inquire if you have on hand such an item as a swift-acting, exotic Indonesian poison, which, being of vegetative origin, leaves no trace? Frankly, I have neglected to bring mine . . ."

A mutter of disappointment was followed by a further consultation

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of the assembled butlers, but no sooner had they begun when a shot rang out, there was a shattering of glass, and O'Donnell fell forward. Richards turned him over; there was a bullet hole in the exact center of his forehead. Their eyes left Stirrup; his captor's grip perceptibly loosened. Stirrup broke away, snatched up the poker, smashed the window and, jumping forward onto the terrace, ran for his life.

He reached the road just in time to see the headlights of an automobile moving away. "*Help!*" he shouted. "*Help! Help!*"

The car went into reverse, came back to him. Two men emerged.

"Hello—a stranger," said the driver. He was a man with long grey hair, clad neatly, if unconventionally, in golf-knickers, deerstalking cap, and smoking-jacket.

"The most fantastic thing—" Stirrup gasped. "My life was threatened by the inhabitants of that house back there!"

The other man cried, "Ah, the scoundrels!" He wore a greasy regimental dinner-jacket and a soft, squashed hat; he shook a clenched fist towards the house and slashed the air with his cane. Deep-set eyes blazed in a gaunt face. Then, abruptly, his expression changed to an ingratiating smile. "It is at a time like this, sir," he said to Stirrup, "that I am sure you must ask yourself, 'Are my loved ones adequately protected in case of mishap, misadventure, or untoward occurences affecting me?' Now, the Great South British Assurance Company, of which I am an agent, has a policy—"

"Stop that, you fool!" hissed the driver. "Can't you ever remember that all that's over with, now?" He took a revolver from his pocket, and Stirrup—suddenly recalling the bullet in O'Donnell's head—trembled. But as the other man's face creased with disappointment and petulance, the driver said to Stirrup, "Pray do not be alarmed, sir. But in the matter of butlers one simply *must* be prepared with strong measures. *They* stick at nothing—fancy threatening an innocent, inoffensive gentleman such as yourself! My motto, when confronted with butlers, is: 'St. George and No Quarter!'"

A trifle nervously, Stirrup said, "If you could drive me to the nearest town—"

"All in good season, sir" the man answered, waving his weapon carelessly. "I was once tried for shooting my butler; did you know that? I am not ashamed—in fact, I glory in the deed. It was during the grouse season in Scotland—I'd caught the swine pilfering my segars. Gave him a fair run before bringing him down; then claimed it was an accident." He chuckled richly. "Jury returned a verdict of Not Proven . . . You should've seen the face of the Procurator-Fiscal!"

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"*I* was never even indicted," the man in the dirty regimentals and crushed trilby observed, with no small amount of smugness. "When I discovered that *my* butler had been selling the port to the local, I coursed him with hounds through the Great Park . . . would have caught him, too, only the cowardly blighter broke his neck falling from a tree which he had climbed in trying to escape. 'Death by Misadventure' was all the coroner could say. Hah! . . . But then these damnation taxes obliged me to sell the Great Park, and reduced me to a low assurance broker. *Me!*" He ground his teeth.

Scarcely knowing if he should believe these wild tales, Stirrup said, "You have all my sympathy. Now, my book, *The Vintage Vengeance*—to give you only a single example—brought me in twenty-one hundred pounds clear of taxes the year it was written; whereas last year—"

The driver of the car turned from his revolver. His brows, which were twisted into horny curves of hair at the ends, went up—up—up— "*You* wrote *'The Vintage Vengeance'*? *You* are that fellow Rodney Stirrup?"

Stirrup drew himself erect. It was recognition such as this which almost made up for treacherous publishers, ungrateful mistresses, and a declining public. "I am. Did you read it? Did you like it?"

"Read it? We read it twen-ty-sev-en times! We were par*ti*cularly interested in the character of Sir Athelny Aylemore, the unfortunate victim: excellently-delineated portrait of a great gentleman. But you will recall, that Sir Athelny was a baronet. Now, baronets possess the only hereditary degree of knighthood, and hence should be accorded an infinite degree of respect. And yet—we feel—your book failed to show a correct amount of respect."

The other man scowled, cut at the air with his cane. "Not at all a correct amount of respect," he said.

"The butlers," Stirrup began, trying to shift the conversation.

Again the driver ground his teeth. "I'm prepared for *them!* See here—a cartridge clip with silver bullets. My gunsmith—Motherthwaite's of Bond Street—wriggled like an eel when I ordered them, and a similar set for shot-guns, but in the end he had them made up for me. Lucky for him. Hah!" He snorted, aimed at an imaginary and refractory gunsmith, went *Poom!*, and—with a wickedly self-pleased air—blew imaginary smoke from the muzzle.

Stirrup gave a nervous swallow, then said, with a half-convulsive giggle, "My word, but there's a lot of superstition in this part of the country! That yokel in the smock —"

The driver rubbed the muzzle

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of his revolver against his smoking-jacket. "Yokel in a smock? Why, that's Daft Alfie. Drowned in the mill-pond about the time of the Maori War—or was it the Matabele? But they couldn't prove suicide so he ended up in the churchyard instead of at the crossroads. . . . So Daft Alf's been walking again, has he? Hah!"

His friend came forward, turned his feverishly bright eyes on Stirrup. "Now, in *our* case," he said, "there was no doubt at all. Prior to crashing our car into the ferro-concrete abutment, we left in triplicate a note explaining that it was an act of protest against the Welfare State which had, through usurpatous taxation, reduced us to penury—"

"—and furthermore had made the people so improvident that they no longer even desired to purchase the assurance policies which we were obliged to vend. And we *insisted* upon crossroads burial as a further gesture of defiance. But the wretched authorities said it would be a violation of both the Inhumation and Highways Acts. *So*—"

Stirrup felt the numbness creeping up his legs. "Then you are—then you were—"

The man with the revolver said, "Forgive my boorishness. Yes: I, my dear fellow, was Sir Sholto Shadwell, of Shadwell-upon-Stour; and this was Sir Peregrine de Pall of Pall Hall, Hants.—my partner in the assurance agency to which these degenerate times had driven us. We were well-known. The venal press often said of us that in our frequent pranks and japes we resembled characters from the novels of Rodney Stirrup more than we did real people. They used to call us—"

"The used to call us 'The Batty Baronets,'" said Sir Peregrine; "though I can't think why!"

Their laughter rang out loud and mirthlessly as Sir Sholto raised his revolver and Sir Peregrine slid away the casing from his sword-cane.

"It grows so demnation tejus back at the Baronets' Valhalla," one of them muttered sulkily, as they closed in.

Rodney Stirrup, suppressing the instinct which rose in every cell of him to flee shrieking down the lonely road across the moors, raised his hand and eyebrows.

"One moment, gentlemen—or should I not rather phrase it, 'Sirs Baronet'?"

"*Hem* . . . You should, yes." Sir Sholto let his revolver sink a trifle. Sir Peregrine, prodding a turf with the point of the sword, nodded portentously.

Straining very hard, Stirrup managed to produce the lineaments of gratified desire in the form of a thankful smile. "I am *so* glad to have that point cleared up—Burke's was of no help at all, you know."

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"None whatsoever. Certainly not. Burke's—*pah!*" Sir Peregrine spitted the turf. A trifle uncertainly, he asked, "You had some, ah, especial reason—?"

Never since that frenzied but glorious week at Monte in the year '27, when deadlines of novels from three publishers were pressing upon him, had Rodney Stirrup improvised so rapidly. "A very, very especial reason. I *had* intended, in my next novel, due to appear on Boatwright's Spring List, to urge the election of a certain number of Baronets to the House of Lords, in a manner similar to that of Representative Scottish Peers. Such a proposal could not fail of benefit. ['Certainly not!'—Sir Sholto] But then the question arises, how is such a one to be addressed? 'The honorable member' obviously won't do. ['Won't do at all!'—Sir Peregrine] What then? You, with that erudition which has always characterized your Rank—" the two hereditary knights coughed modestly, fiddled their weapons with a certain measure of embarrassment— "have supplied the answer: 'Sir Baronet.'" He allowed the smile to vanish, an easy task, and sighed.

"Mphh . . . I notice your use of the past perfect. '*Had* intended.' Eh?"

With a horrible start Stirrup noticed, just beyond the headlights' brightness, the silent approach of a company of men . . . Temper obviously in no way improved by the hole in his forehead, O'Donnell scowled hideously.

Speaking very rapidly, Stirrup said in a loud voice, "I am not to blame. The reading public little realize the small extent to which writers are their own masters. My own attitude in regard to baronets and, ah, butlers, was of no moment at all. *It was my publisher!* Laughs at butlers. Despises baronets. I give you my word. Indeed, I would freely admit how richly I deserve the punishment an ignoble government has failed to mete out to me for the slanders I have written—but I really could not help it. I was bound hand and foot by contracts. How many times have I stood there with tears in my eyes. 'Another bad butler,' demanded Boatwright. 'Another silly baronet,' Boatwright insisted. . . . What could I do?"

There was a long silence. Then Peebles stepped forward. "It was very wrong of you, sir," he said. "But your weakness is not altogether beyond exculpation."

"Not altogether, no," conceded Sir Sholto, twisting a lock of his long, grey hair. "The second Sir Sholto, outraged by the filthy treatment accorded the proffered manuscript of his experiences in the Peninsular Wars, was in the habit of toasting Old Boney for having once shot a publisher."

"And quite properly, Sir Sholto," said Peebles.

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"Never would've been allowed if the Juke of Cumberland hadn't been cozened out of the Crown by Salic Law," said Sir Peregrine, moodily.

Peebles stiffened. "While it is true that a mere valet has not the status of a butler, and equally true that His Royal Highness (later King Earnest of Hanover) was absolved of guilt for having caused the death of his personal gentleman—"

"Who was a foreigner anyway," Stirrup put in, "taking bread from the mouths of honest British men, and richly deserving of his fate."

Butlers and baronets, the matter put in this light, nodded judiciously.

"Therefore," said Peebles, "I propose a Joint Convocation of both Houses, as it were, to deal with the Case of The Infamous Publisher Boatwright."

"Skewer the scoundrel with a rusty sword, you mean? And then splatter his tripes with a silver bullet or two?"

Peebles said that that was the precise tenor of his meaning, and that he much admired Sir Sholto's vigorous way of phrasing it.

"Mr. Boatwright is at his country place not far from here at this very moment," Rodney Stirrup quickly pointed out. "The Mill-Race, Little Chitterlings, near Guilford." He held his breath.

Then, "*Fiat justicia!*" exclaimed Peebles.

And, "St. George. No Quarter, and Perish Publishers!" cried the Baronets.

There was a diffident cough, and a large, pear-shaped man with prominent and red-rimmed eyes, stepped forward. He looked at Stirrup and Stirrup felt his hair follicles retreat.

"If I may take the liberty, gentlemen—" he said, with an air both diffident and determined.

"Hullo, hullo, what's this?" Peebles queried. "A newcomer to our ranks. Pray, silence, gentlemen: a maiden speech."

"It is not without misgivings that I feel obliged to pause *en route* to the Butlers' Valhalla and raise a rather unpleasant matter," said the newcomer. "I am Bloor, late butler to Jeremy Boatwright. Not being conversant with the latter's business affairs I can neither confirm nor deny Mr. Stirrup's charges. However, I feel it my duty to point out that while Mr. Stirrup was for many years an annual weekend guest at The Mill-Race (Little Chitterlings, near Guilford), *he invariably Failed to tip the butler on taking his departure!*"

There was a chorus of sharp, hissing, indrawn breaths. Lips were curled, eyebrows raised.

"Not the thing, not the thing at all," said Sir Peregrine. "Shoot butlers, yes, certainly. But—fail to tip them on leaving? Not done, simply not *done*.

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"A loathsome offense," said Arbuthnot.

"Despicable," Peebles declared.

Stirrup, trembling, cried, "It was the fault of my publisher in not allowing me a proper share of royalties—" But this was ill-received.

"Won't do, won't do." Sir Sholto shook his head. "Can't scrape out of it that way a second time. If one's income obliges one to dine on fish and chips in a garret, then *dine* on fish and chips in a garret —dressing first, I need hardly add. But unless one is prepared to tip the butler, one simply does not accept weekend invitations. By gad," he said furiously, "chap who would do that, would shoot foxes!"

"Afoot," said Sir Peregrine.

Bloor said that it was not that he wished to be vindictive. It was purely out of duty to his profession that he now made public the offense which had rankled—nay, festered—so long in his bosom.

"I see nothing else for it," said Peebles, heavily. "Mr. Rodney Stirrup must occupy the Lesser Guest Room at Butlers' Valhalla until his unspeakable dereliction be attoned for."

"Man's a rank outsider," huffed Sir Sholto. "And to think I was about to ask him to shoot with us when the were-grouse season starts!"

The Lesser Guest Room! In a sudden flash of dim, but all-sufficient, light, Stirrup saw what his fate must be. Henceforth his life was one long week-end. His room would be the one furthest from the bath, his mattress irrevocably lumpy. The shaving water would always be cold, the breakfast invariably over, no matter how early he arose. His portion at meals, the gristle; his wine (chocked with leas), the worst of the off-vintage years. The cigar-box was forever to be empty, and the whisky locked away . . .

His spirits broke. Stirrup quailed.

For a brief moment he sought comfort in the fate awaiting Boatwright—and then a most dreadful doubt came to him. Sir Sholto Shadwell's silver bullets: Ghosts, werewolves (and were-grouse), vampires, ghouls—yes; but would they work, he wondered despairingly—*could* they work—on a creature infinitely more evil and ungodly? Was there anything of any nature in any world at all, really, which could kill a publisher?

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One of Thomas Mann's three daughters here presents a concise and totally convincing picture of the ultimate triumph of the labor-saving device.

For Sale, Reasonable

by Elizabeth Mann Borgese

To Whom It May Concern: [1]

I should like to apply for work on a permanent basis. It is difficult, I know, to compete with machines today, but I offer special features that few machines can match, and the savings involved in acquiring my services are substantial.

I've won the telequiz on football, on vital statistics, and on the history of Italian miniature painting. Even while operating sixteen hours a day in any given field, I am able to "learn" a new matter within the span of a week, the facts being fed to me by a radio under the pillow during the four hours at night I need for recharging. I can play at one time six games of bridge without looking at any of them. I can beat the most complex electronic chess machine and resist for eighty days the robot that plays "odd and even."

I am conditioned to work immediately on calculating long-range effects of new methods of salesmanship on the shopping habits of middle-aged women in small and medium-sized rural communities

[1] *The following document of the year 1979, is among the earliest of this type on record. We reproduce it in its entirety because it sheds some light on the curious mimetic relationship, the puzzling transfer of qualities between man and machine, that began to become noticeable around the middle of the twentieth century. S.T. was purchased by the Inland Joy Development Corporation (I.J.D.C.) on April 24, 1980. The concept of liberty having been undermined by the political, social, and economic practices of the period, it was natural that the contract between S.T. and I.J.D.C. initiated a long series of similar self-sales, which, in turn, gave rise to the exorbitantly rich but reliably docile class of "promach" brains or Neo-Helots.*

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in the corn-belt area. You may install me free of charge for a trial period of ninety days.

The services I can offer are hard for a machine to beat. The robot gets out of order once in a while, suffers indispositions entailing expensive repairs. My physical condition is stabilized: I've had a flu shot and a cold shot and an omnivalent antibacterial. It would take something very unusual to strip my gears. I've had a brain wash, a pain screen, and a dissexer, and my disposition, you will understand, is very gentle indeed —a claim which cannot be made for the machine in each and every case.

I am not divulging any secret, although the press has been suppressing the facts, if I remind you that there's been trouble brewing with the machines of late, from the—how shall I call it—psychotechnical angle. Played-down headings, such as "Belgium's New Giant Brain Refuses to Think," or "Harvard Supercalculator's Forecast on U.S. Happy-Pill Consumption Undecodable," crop up again and again on the back pages of our papers, despite the above-mentioned tendency to sit on the news. The plain fact is that the machines are jealous of men, are beginning to feel the pinch of human competition. In isolation, no doubt, the perfectly balanced giant brain is pure of any emotions, since its psychological troubles arise largely from the social context (as, for that matter, is the case with man). However, the fact is that operators are stealthily feeding the brains facts which are none of a machine's business.

The operators tell them of all that man has done and man can do, and then they solicit answers to heckling questions. The result is that the machines "refuse to think," or release undecodable streams of signals on which float bits of mutilated, obscene messages. Or they repeat "Do it yourself, do it yourself," and blow their multi-million-dollar tops; or they may hit the operator with painful electrical charges. In Germany, this kind of behavior on the part of numerous machines has amounted recently to what might be termed a strike—a thing unheard of among men for more than fifteen years. The dismantling of obsolete calculators, as is well known, has produced veritable duels between man and machine, and cost the life of many an operator. The dismantling, of course, is now effected exclusively by atomic charges—a heroic end, undoubtedly, for the calculator, but at the same time a regrettable loss of valuable, still usable parts.

I do not dispute the machine's superiority in certain fields, fields in which the human brain will never equal its productivity. But there are numerous types of work which can be equally well ac-

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complished by men, and in these, I submit, it would be rational to employ men, saving precious hours of machine power and cutting the cost and the trouble of plant management.

The financial saving involved in employing men would be substantial. It is undoubtedly more costly to maintain a calculator than to satisfy the simple needs of man, and the capital investment in the purchase of a machine is gigantic. I grant you that, in principle, such investment in the means of production is sane, and the feeling of owning such means of production, elating. (The Holy Father himself has recently hinted that automation should not put an end to private property.)

But there is no reason on earth why I should not offer my services—viz., myself—on the terms at which you acquire a calculator—only much cheaper. (The machines will sputter with envy.)

I offer myself at the humble price of dollars ninety-nine thousand, five hundred, plus sales tax. (The giant brain, you realize, cost millions.) That will buy me a home in Garden City with three baths and a built-in kitchen. It will buy me a pool with tiles from Ravenna and a cruise to Hawaii and an English lawn with Greek statuettes (all that is much cheaper than the machine) and a set of new teeth and contact lenses and a double garage and two thousand pounds of books with Florentine bindings. It will aircool the house and see the children through the most exclusive of schools (the contract should grant you an option on one or more of my children, as you wish), a canoe with a sail and a dog with a pedigree (the price of a good machine is frighteningly high).

Upon the signing of the sale's contract you pay for my upkeep a mere four or five hundred dollars a month. For that you acquire all my working hours—I am ready at once to work on new methods of stimulating the spending on leisure industries by retired oldsters in suburban areas of the metropolis; further, you may guide my hobbies—I'll turn over to you any gains from telequizes and similar games (you could not, of course, enter a machine in a telequiz, could you?).

At the end of a five-year period you may transfer the contract, if you choose, to another purchaser. Acquiring my services, he would return your investment to you, probably with a capital gain—where the machine depreciates, becomes obsolete (who would want to be bothered with a second-hand giant brain?) my value, and therefore my price, would go up as a result of vocational, on-the-job education.

The deal, you will realize, is equally profitable for purchaser and purchased.

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It will buy me a mixmaster and a superwasher and an electric reading machine and a tankish home sweeper and a woe-grinding garbage disposal and an automatic you-know-what.

It will buy me machines galore which will, in turn, save me precious hours of manpower, and set me free.

Very sincerely yours,

S.T.

Detroit, Michigan, Labor Day, 1979.

Space Burial

Where nothing holds us, where long light
Can barely stretch, we leave you, friend.
From this steel shell you take your flight
Without the aid of steel or air,
Or need of them. So, weightless, end
All waiting, hope or care.

Tomorrow on a million moons
A million suns will rise—on you
They shine forever; no cocoons
Of shadow shall eclipse your ride,
No worms shall eat your glory through,
Nor earth devour your pride.

We spring from earth, but in these lanes
Of vacancy forget our source.
New worlds lie yonder!—So on vanes
Of fire we flash there. You are gone,
Friend; take with you our brief remorse.
We mourn but we go on.

BRIAN W. ALDISS

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BOOKS

From the Horse's Mouth

by Damon Knight

LITERATE AND INFORMED CRITICISM of our field is rare, as you know; even in the s.f. magazines, book reviews are mostly of the "shopping guide" type, written by men who, in James Blish's phrase, "like everything, but not very much." (Anthony Boucher, reviewer in this magazine for over nine years, was and is a distinguished exception.) In the organs of respectable criticism, such as *The Saturday Review*, we are used to reading awe-inspiring blurts of ignorance from people like Phil Stong, who once innocently revealed that he thought a light year was equivalent to 186,000 "plain years."

The volume at hand, therefore, is a treasure. THE SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL, IMAGINATION AND SOCIAL CRITICISM (Advent, Box 9228, Chicago 90, Ill., $3.50) contains three brilliant and searching essays by Robert A. Heinlein, Robert Bloch and the late Cyril Kornbluth (plus one dud, by Alfred Bester), and an equally brilliant introduction by Basil Davenport.

Heinlein's contribution is especially priceless, first because he happens to have written so many of the pivotal works in the field since 1939, and second because he has a seldom-displayed but highly developed critical talent.

For the first time, he gives the sources of such stories as "Waldo" and "Blowups Happen"—both frequently cited as examples of prophecy in s.f.—and shows why they were no more prophetic than "for a man to look out a train window, see that another train is coming head-on toward his own on the same track—and predict a train wreck."

He pays a graceful tribute to Edmond Hamilton, whose imaginary spacesuits in a 1931 story influenced Heinlein's in 1939—which in turn influenced the real ones he and L. Sprague de Camp helped develop during the war.

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And he asks, ". . . is it surprising that the present day space suit (or high-altitude pressure suit, if you prefer) now used by the U. S. Air Force strongly resembles in appearance and behavior the space suit visualized by Edmond Hamilton in 1931?"

In the dispute over the best definition of s.f., Heinlein casts his ballot for Reginald Bretnor's (paraphrased): "[Fiction] in which the author shows awareness of the nature and importance of the human activity known as the scientific method, shows equal awareness of the great body of human knowledge already collected through that activity, and takes into account in his stories the effects and possible future effects on human beings of scientific method and scientific fact." This definition is perhaps at once a little too broad and too limited (it includes ARROWSMITH, but excludes stories which most informed readers would simply call bad science fiction); but it does have the great virtue of defining *good* science fiction, and of showing that much of the magazines' current contents is not s.f. at all, but "pseudo-scientific fantasy."

Kornbluth's main point, or at least the one which gives his paper its title, is that science fiction is ineffective as social criticism. Within the narrow terms he chose, the point is made; s.f. has produced no novel which has visibly and unarguably changed the ways of the world, as did DON QUIXOTE and UNCLE TOM'S CABIN. (But I wonder if he didn't turn up a negative result because he was looking for the wrong clues. Science fiction changes the world, perhaps not by influencing people's attitudes toward each other, but certainly—and visibly—by influencing people's ideas about things. Heinlein mentions an electronic device he thought up for a 1939 magazine serial; a classmate who read the story was intrigued and put the idea into development; the final version was in use all through World War II.)

The remainder of the paper is given over to Kornbluth's first and only try at the tricky, fascinating art of symbological criticism. He warned us he would make mistakes, and I think there is no doubt that he did: for instance, his calling Swift's Houyhnhnms symbols of primitive virtue is pretty clearly an error (tipped off by his remarking in the next breath that "It is curious that Swift's symbol for primitive virtue should be the horse"). He was mistaken, too, in supposing that there is anything unusual in the womb-image as the symbol of dread and horror; see Erich Neumann's monumental work, THE GREAT MOTHER. But his interpretations of Orwell's "Room 101" in 1984, the unspeakable Eich of Dr. E. E. Smith's Lensman series, and other matters, are

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nothing short of spectacular.

Alfred Bester's breezy, rambling monologue is disappointing to me as some of his stories are, and the fact that one throws light on the other does not seem to help. My admiration for Bester as an artist is all but unbounded (and goes back almost twenty years, to a story he has probably forgotten himself: "The Unseen Blushers"). But even in his best, most dazzlingly pyrotechnic work, his carelessness with scientific fact sometimes bothers me; and to hear him say, as he does here, that the essential ingredient in a story is charm, or "personality," and that the science in it is unimportant—even though it perfectly and logically accounts for THE STARS MY DESTINATION—only intensifies the feeling. When Bester suggests that people don't turn to science fiction for information, of course he's right: but the point is they don't turn to science fiction for misinformation, either.

Robert Bloch, a loyal s.f. fan for many years, begins by describing his childhood, when "stories about Bug-Eyed Monsters were read by bug-eyed boys."

He notes in passing, very perceptively, that most science fiction is symbolic rather than realistic. For the adolescent rebelling against his elders, "there's a vicarious thrill in breaking the law, even if it's the law of gravity."

But he wonders what has happened to the uncompromising social rebelliousness of thirty years ago, when novelists dared to suggest that our Way of Life was not in all details sacrosanct; and he shows, in a devastating attack, that s.f., supposedly the last stronghold of independent thought, actually has been repeating the same safe old ideas for years. Part of the list follows (condensed): "1. A TOTALITARIAN STATE. 2. THE UNDERGROUND. 3. FORCIBLE PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC TECHNIQUES. 4. The assumption that SCIENCE WILL GO ALONG WITH THE GAG and obediently wash brains for Capital, Labor, the Military, the Clergy or whatever (. . .)." (This one, incidentally, seems to me to be no assumption but a well-documented fact.)

I've said hardly anything about Basil Davenport's introduction, because it is itself a critical summary, competing with this one (and, I'm afraid, superior in every way). But I can't do better than to quote his closing lines, as the publishers' jacket blurb does:

"This book has given me the pleasure, all too rare since my college days, of being a book that I could argue with. No one can agree with all these papers, since they do not agree with each other; but where you disagree you will find yourself wanting to say exactly how far and why. That is my idea of a really stimulating and enjoyable book."

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". . . man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken. . . ." But what of those mourners whose love is so demanding that they attempt to piece together the shattered bowl? When such selfish, determined living encounter the weary and equally determined dead, the result may well be. . . .

IMPASSE

by Jane Roberts

THE BODY LAY LIKE A SACRIFICE before the flickering candles in the closed, narrow room, performing its last social function.

"Yes, I'm truly dead." Is that what the corpse was saying? "See, my lungs are quiet, and my limbs motionless. Do you bend closer to make sure? Do you imagine that the chest moved imperceptibly? Was that a sudden intake of breath, a flicker of eyelid?"

Through the hushed, uneasy atmosphere of the mourners' hidden fears, the funeral director moved with supreme confidence and fatherly assurance. He was the prehistoric witch doctor, the priest of final ritualistic ceremonies, the mediator between the living and the dead. He smiled, touched hands, nodded with sober emphasis, held off subconscious terror through the very fact of his presence. He had performed the first part of his duties well; now he was the host at the corpse's final party.

His voice was low, well modulated. There was a chantlike litany about his, "Good day, right this way," and his footsteps were quiet on the animal-thick, soft rug. The people's voices hushed to a whisper. If someone yelled, would the corpse awaken?

At first they sat quietly, the mourners, sat stiffly in the dark, straight-backed chairs. They stared rigidly, cast embarrassed glances at the undertaker, studiously avoided the silent corpse.

Then, the first foot on the ice—"He looks well, doesn't he? Almost . . . alive."

"Of course, he was sick so long . . ."

"And his face *is* thin."

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"But all in all, you did a beautiful job, Mr. James."

"Yes. Well, he was a good man," the funeral director said, and every ear listened to the use of the past tense. Suddenly, almost miraculously, everyone relaxed. People smiled, still embarrassed, but relieved. They moved about more bravely. Someone ventured to stand close to the velvet-covered casket, caught in the aura of heavily scented flowers, and looked down. Then others.

The face was a brown walnut glued to the body, the eyes closed, painted on without artistry. A tangled lock of white hair lay on the forehead and Jenny tried not to scream. It isn't grandfather! I won't let it be! And she stared with dry eyes, following the crease in the trousers, the pattern of white handkerchief in the breast pocket.

Old images overlaid the present. She saw him, dark and wiry, standing before the family burial plot on Memorial days, after the parades and flags and flowers.

"This is where your grandmother lies, on the hill here, under the white marker. And there's the empty one, the only piece of land I own." And even then, she used to shiver and clench her fists and hate the grave so certain of its future tenant. While she was still a child, the earth had claimed her parents. Her grandmother had died when she was scarcely ten.

And now grandfather lay in the casket.

She stared at it, frowning. Her mind was a whirl of anger, even while friends told her to be brave, and touched her hand.

During the long ride to the cemetery she felt rage brimming against him, because she knew he had wanted to die. "I'm old, Jen. Nothing left to live for," he'd said.

Her hands were white in her lap. The procession of automobiles wound soberly through blurred city streets.

Then the mourners stood together on the hill, witnesses as the body was safely imprisoned in the ground. And the funeral was over; the last shovelful of dirt on the grave, the last physical vestige of the familiar image gone.

Did you give in peacefully at the last, Jenny wondered, or, sobbing, did you struggle in denial? "How could you die, little daddy? How could you bear to?" (He was short; she had called him little daddy since she was a child.)

"You wanted to go," she thought. "That makes it worse. How is it possible that you'd die and leave me alone, with no one left? Don't you know that my own death is accomplished now, that I can never neglect its certainty, that it will follow, like a hound? Everyone I ever loved is dead. I'm only twenty, and already I'm alone."

She stood straight and unyield-

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ing. Someone touched her arm and she stared defiantly until they turned away. She looked at her grandmother's grave. You wanted him all to yourself—well, now you have him, she thought, and gritted her teeth, and felt with perverse satisfaction the chillness of the wind that whipped the skirt of her black nylon dress.

She stared at the fresh earth and shook her black head of hair and told her grandfather all these things without looking up or speaking or causing commotion, because she'd lived with him twenty years and knew he wouldn't listen if she made a fuss.

Then the people left, swiftly, without looking back, and her boyfriend touched her arm. "Where do you want to go?" he asked. Then, "Jenny, stop staring and muttering to yourself. Your grandfather's dead. It's over. There's no use thinking about it now. Death is inevitable. Death..."

"Stop it! Do you hear me? Don't say it." She wrenched away and stood there, shaking. What had she ever seen in him? He wasn't her own flesh and blood. Why couldn't he have died instead of her grandfather?

"You're upset," he said. "Tired and upset. But it's futile to pretend that death doesn't exist. You have to face it. Your grandfather led a full life. He was tired and he wanted to die. Now he's dead and—"

"He is not. He isn't!" She yelled and shoved him away, and he left with the last of the others. Suddenly she knew, and wondered that she had not known before. They were lying. It was only their belief that made him dead, only acquiescence to the concept of death could make it real; as long as one did not believe, the grave would be empty.

Armed with this sudden knowledge, she stood straighter by the fresh grave, and forced herself to contain her triumph until she could speak.

They'd insisted, the family, from the time of her parent's accident, that she stay with them and not be sent to foster parents or orphanages. One by one, they had died. And now, finally, grandfather. If he were dead, then her own death was accomplished, the life force of the family run out.

But she wouldn't allow it. And it wasn't so. She was alive. She laughed, and held out her arms and felt her legs, and drank heavy draughts of air. How could she have believed them? And if she was alive, then her grandfather had to be!

She laughed again, and called loudly. "Little daddy, you can't deceive me. You let yourself be betrayed, but you aren't dead—I *know* you aren't. You hear me—I'm sure you do. Speak to me... You can't die. I still need you."

She stood trembling, waiting,

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for he *would* speak. She would force him to. But there was only silence, with muffled sounds of traffic in the distance, and Jenny raged and threatened, and swore she would not be put off or give up.

She bit her lips and set her jaw. "I won't let you die. I won't. And you can't, as long as I insist on your existence. Oh, I know *you.* You're listening and sighing and waiting for me to leave." She laughed again, wildly, squinting through the sunlight.

"Did you ever know me not to get my own way? Did you? Haven't I always argued and teased until I got what I wanted? Do you think I'm going to give up now?"

And while she was speaking, he came so quietly that at first she did not know. There was only the slightest suggestion of movement, like the trembling of a leaf, the turning of a flower. She was still glaring at his grave when he stood beside her, methodically brushing dirt from his best brown suit. While she watched, spell-bound, he took off his shoes and emptied the dust upon the grass.

She laughed, and breathed with him as he tilted his head back. When he was finished, he clicked his teeth together like he always did when he was angry or displeased. But she smiled. She knew how to handle him, and she kissed him and smoothed down his hair.

"Oh, little daddy, aren't you glad? What does it feel like? Isn't it grand, you and I together again, and you not dead at all?"

His hawk eyes frowned. He tilted his small, wan face, and blew back a lock of white hair. "I'm worse than you," he said. "I couldn't resist. But without you yelling, I could have made out. It's going to be harder this time." He sighed and looked around him at the markers and flowers. "You are worse than your mother was. I tried to make you grow up decent, unselfish. But I spoiled you, and now I'm paying."

"Will other people see you too? Really, I mean? Can you eat?" she asked, pretending not to hear.

"Yes. I'm hungry again and tired again. Nope. Nobody can see me but you. They all think I'm dead . . . dead, Jen, like I ought to be."

He was so obstinate, so stubborn. But she'd make him want to live. He'd forget, change. She put her arms around him, touched her smooth face to his rough cheeks. "I only wanted to help. Just to help, that's all," she said, remembering to let tears touch her lashes. She gulped, sighed again, and for a moment she thought that he was going to stroke her hair.

But he frowned, and disentangled her arms. "You don't want to die, Jen, so no one else can. We protected you too much.

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But I'm stubborn too. And I'm going to die sometime. Sometime," he said, glancing down at his browned, wrinkled hands, the thin, matchlike body.

"Die?" She sprang up. "Little daddy, you're mad." Tears exploded. "Why, why on earth? After all I've done, you mean I've got to go on fighting? Keep that up, willing you alive every second? I won't have it, I tell you. You're alive, and you'll stay that way."

"We'll talk about it later," he said, and bit his lips together. "I'm hungry now, thanks to you." But Jenny still stood there, astounded.

"You mean you're not happy? Not glad?" It was utterly incomprehensible. "You're not glad to see me, either," she cried, suddenly hurt. He hadn't kissed her once.

He flushed, leaned over and kissed her on the forehead. Her arms reached out to hug him. "Little daddy, it's so . . ."

"Jen, don't you go calling me that. It's a baby name, what you called me when you were a child. You're a woman now, full grown." There was pain in his eyes, and bewilderment. She read into his words other things not spoken, and knew that he had returned not because of her threats, but because of his love; and that he thought she had betrayed him, taken advantage.

After all she'd done. But she didn't care. When he got used to living again, he'd change. "C'mon," she said. "Off to eat." It was as if she were a child again. She skipped a half step and smiled up at him, but he frowned, and shook his head.

When they neared the restaurant, he warned her to order only one meal which he would share, and not to speak to him in front of others, or they would think her mad. So she sat and watched him eat, and there was no one with whom to share her triumph. Even grandfather sat silent and unimpressed, and though he ate with unusual relish, he wouldn't give her the satisfacton of saying he enjoyed the meal.

The late afternoon sun filtered down through the cafe curtains, shone on the edge of the polished wooden table. She'd chosen a table near the back, and the sound of clinking dishes drifted in from the kitchen, and the whooshing of water. Was grandfather gobbling up the sounds, she wondered, listening to them gratefully after the silence of the grave?

He was! He *was* happy to be alive. He had to be, she told herself. And she didn't have to be alone, and could depend upon him always. She smiled, in sudden good humor, and later, because he loved the water, she drove him to the lake.

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Afterwards they went to his room in the boardinghouse, and after that they walked the streets until he was tired, and then back to the boarding house again. Mrs. Waling, the landlady, nodded her head, patted Jenny on the arm, feeling sorry, and sent her up a cup of tea.

The room was too quiet. Jenny forced a bright smile and tried to recapture her elation.

Her grandfather sat on the edge of the bed. The wind ruffled the curtains, and the room seemed somehow vacant—already cleaned of the grandfather smell of shaving cream and lotion, newspapers, and later the sweet-sour smell of sickness and defeat.

Jenny sat with her long legs crossed, examining her fingernails, listening to her grandfather's breathing, loud across the room. She'd bought a paper earlier, when they were walking. "I forgot. Here's the paper—you can sit and read it by the window like you used to do."

"Yes, then walk the streets, sit in the park, go out for a snack, walk some more and then home to bed."

"Anything," she said. "Anything you want."

"And wonder what to do with myself," he went on, "And wake up each day more tired than when I went to bed. Is that what you want, Jen, is it?"

"But it will all be different." It would be. She'd make it different. "I promise," she said.

His pale fingers scratched across the dry newspaper pages. She saw him reading the obituaries and tried to snatch the page away. "I saw it, Jen."

"What? What?"

"Ben Logan dead."

"Ben Logan?" A friend. What luck! He must have been a friend. Why hadn't she remembered to check? She'd have to be more careful. More . . .

"One by one, Jen."

She interrupted him. "But there are others. We can visit. I'll take you to see anyone you like." Eagerly now, watching him.

"No one can see me, Jen. Except you. They think I'm dead."

"But you can see them!" She was talking too quickly. She couldn't stop. "You can see them, and listen to them talk. Haven't you ever had the urge to listen to people, and spy, without their knowing? I have, I . . ."

His face stopped her. She was growing tired but she clamped her lips together and stared at him out of the corner of her eye.

He was building up to something. She lit a cigarette and frantically tried to ward him off.

"I'm tired," he began.

"Of course you are." Solicitously, she smiled, bent over him, got a pillow for his head. "There, rest a bit. You'll feel better. And later, later we'll buy you a farm.

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You always wanted one, remember? I still have some of my father's money left. Enough and more. You can have chickens, cows if you want . . ."

"No, Jen." He put the pillow aside. It was growing dark. She had a sudden fear that he would disappear in the shadows.

"No one will ever know. I'll live there too, with you." Nervously she switched on the light. How fragile, how brittle and pale he looks, she thought, and quickly tried to shove the knowledge aside. "Just the two of us." Her voice rose. "Well, why not?"

It wouldn't work, it wouldn't. She sighed. It would. She'd make it work. She couldn't get tired now. She had to make him stay alive.

He ran his fingers through his hair and rubbed his knees and stood up again, staring out the window. "It won't do you any good, my staying around any longer. For awhile, I thought it might; but it won't. You've got to learn to stand alone, grow up. And I'm tired, I'm . . ."

"Don't say any more tonight, grandfather. Wait till tomorrow, please. You wouldn't want to leave me alone at night!"

He said, looking straight at her, proud but with hurt lingering in the tired hollows of his eyes, "No one else in our family was ever a coward, Jen. You say you want to live; but you don't. You're afraid, afraid to go on alone, to accept reality, to grow and mature. It's not strength, Jen, but weakness made you call me back."

"That isn't true. It was will power!"

"The desperation of fear, Jen."

Of fear? She stared at him, and for the first time really saw his strength, his courage. And for the first time she felt the incompleteness in herself, the selfishness of her love. Appalled, she cried, "Just a day, wait just a day," but the plea came from her lips only; the fever was gone. It hadn't been his death, but her fear against which she'd raged, and with the realization, her resolve to keep him alive was dissipated by sorrow for what she had done.

"Grandfather?" she questioned.

"You'll be all right, Jen." His eyes were smiling at her. "Here, have a good cry. Get rid of it." He patted the bed beside him.

She threw herself down, and when she looked up again, the room was quiet. A peacefulness invaded her, and she lay there silently. After a while she sat up and wondered what she was doing in her grandfather's old room, and where her boyfriend was. Then she remembered that grandfather was dead, and she hadn't eaten in days.

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A fumbling dilettante discovered a new way to get something for nothing, and launched the world into a golden age . . . but are there really any new ways?

The Harley Helix

by Lou Tabakow

In 1974 Harley Lambert, quite by accident, stumbled on the EK effect. Had his education been more orthodox, he would have known better than to string together so weird an assortment of coils, wires, resistors and vacuum tubes to achieve a result that was already adequately performed by a ninety-eight cent gadget. Had he been anything but a dilettante, he would never have made the mistake of connecting up the fantastic array in reverse.

Be that as it may, when he pulled the switch, a surge of power blew the side out of his laboratory. His insurance company paid promptly enough for the damage, but the adjuster for the insurance firm suggested pointedly to Harley that any further meddling with explosive mixtures of any kind would result in the cancellation of his policy.

Harley, however, had a stubborn streak, and since Harley's Helix, as it later came to be known, was basically undamaged, it was a simple matter to set up makeshift safeguards and repeat the experiment. This time, though the wall was again blown out, Harley obtained some interesting reading. No matter how often he checked and re-checked, the result came out the same—about sixty watts of electrical power had been fed into the apparatus, and a few thousand kilowatts had erupted from the other end.

At this point Harley had the surprising good sense to call in expert advice and assistance, and in less than a year, Harley's Helix was perfected. A model the size and price of a typewriter could supply a good-sized city's power requirements indefinitely, and this meant that mankind had finally managed to violate the First Law of Thermodynamics—something from nothing—unlimited power, free for the asking.

Now if Harley had been an ordinary man he would have done one of two things. He could have sold his invention to the highest bidder and watched it gather dust in the vault of some utility hold-

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ing company, or he could have found backing and marketed the device and eventually have become the richest most powerful man on Earth.

Harley, however, was an idealist—he gave the Helix free and unencumbered to the government.

For a few years there was widespread unemployment and general economic disorder. In its cumbersome way, however, the government eventually effected the change-over, with doles and subsidies and overlapping orders of innumerable commissions, and after the initial panic had passed, a golden era dawned.

Now Harley really hit his stride. He rushed happily from country to country distributing the Helix and preaching peace and brotherhood—and death to the profit motive. Within ten years every other device in the world for producing power was replaced by a Harley Helix.

The countries of the world joined hands in friendship. True, there were some pessimists who maintained that Nature *never* offered something for nothing, and warned against the danger of channeling the entire planet's power requirements through a single unknown and untested device. Since most of these Gloomy Gus's were hard-headed business men, at least some of whom had owned stock in now defunct power companies, little attention was paid to their warnings.

Then one day a strange-looking craft flashed from the sky and landed on the White House lawn. Its speed and maneuverability were such that there was no question as to its extra-terrestrial origin.

From the moment it landed it was surrounded by television cameras, and the people of Earth sat breathlessly by their sets, waiting for their first glimpse of the outsiders.

Finally the door to the strange craft opened and an almost disappointingly man-like creature stepped out. True, there were minor differences, like the seven-fingered hands, and the purple tinge of his skin, but otherwise the alien looked very human.

A delegation of the world's foremost scientists and statesmen advanced with outstretched palms in a gesture of Universal friendship. The alien stepped back into his ship for a moment and then re-appeared carrying a black box trailing four wires. Two of these he attached to his head with some kind of anode paste, and then motioned for one of the delegates to step forward. There was a hurried consultation, and then the assembled crowd cheered as Harley Lambert stepped forward with a smile and without a tremor adjusted the other set of anodes to his forehead. A hush fell over the

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vast assemblage as he began to speak.

"Welcome to Earth! We are glad you waited until now to contact us. Only in the last few years have we become worthy of contact with the other races of the galaxy. Only in the last few years have we learned to live with each other unselfishly. Though we undoubtedly have much to learn from you, we also have much to give. Welcome to Earth!"

The crowd cheered wildly at the conclusion of Harley's greeting. All those present stood straighter and raised their heads, feeling proud and noble and altruistic. The cheering subsided slowly as the alien raised his hand. His voice rang out in loud and unmistakable tones from the black box.

"I don't know anything about all that. I'm a collector for Galactic Utilities. For three time units you've been drawing on our power and we are not, after all, in business for our health. I have come to deliver your bill."

Classical Query Composed While Shampooing

Medusa, Medusa
  In days that were olden
Did you touch up your snakes,
  Turning copper to golden?

Though snakes through the ages
  Have never grown grey,
They do tend to wander;
  They go after prey;

They take to the water;
  They slither while wet—
Did you envy your victims
  Their *permanent* set?

Doris Pitkin Buck

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The machine moved people back and forth in time. It did this safely and comfortably for all concerned. Why, then, was Harry crying? And why did he stop? See page 4 for information on how this story can bring you $100.

SUCCESS STORY

by H. M. Sycamore

LIKE I ALWAYS SAY, ITS WHAT YOU believe that counts in this world. My partner, Stan Budzik, always did believe that his time-machine would work, and so did his sister Judy. I didn't, though; to tell you the truth, I didn't even think we'd ever raise the money to build the thing. Judy tells me I'm a born skeptic.

Nowadays this time-skip deal of ours nets us well over seven thousand in just a few hours of operation, but in the early days of Budzik Associates, seven thousand dollars seemed like the combined wealth of old King Croesus and the Aga Khan. That was how much we needed for materials to build Stan's gadget—$6,612 to be precise. We'd figured it about forty different ways, and that's where it always came out—that or more.

See, Stan always had the idea that some highminded industrialist ought to finance us for the sake of pure science. "Oh, sure," I used to tell him. "They'll be breaking down the doors. In the first place we can't prove the thing'll work until we build it, and in the second place we can't build it until we get some money for materials, and in the third place we haven't been able to think up a commercial use for it, even if it works in the first place." Only all the while I'd be pointing out these wise and sensible things Stan would be wearing that faraway look on his long skinny face, and the next thing I knew he'd be talking about Einstein, or Fermi, or $E=MC^2$ or whatever it is, which pretty well epitomizes Stan Budzik; I mean he couldn't think commercially if he were starving to death.

Actually, it was Judy who solved our money problem, through a little clown by the name of Harry Bottomley. The whole thing was typical of Judy; in her own way she's almost as much of a

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peculiar as her brother. She's sort of attractive, if you like the type, being one of these tall, rangy females who always look like high fashion no matter what they wear. She has dark, burning eyes and a tendency to go in for Causes, and she can be awfully damned irritating at times. But underneath all the phoniness she's a good-hearted kid who'd give you the mink off her back if she thought you needed it, if she had a mink. I *like* Judy—only she's annoying, if you know what I mean.

Anyhow, the way we latched onto Harry Bottomley was that Judy felt sorry for him. She and Stan had stopped in at Hallanan's for a few beers one Saturday night—I heard all about it the next day when I went up to their place for Sunday dinner—and they'd seen this dapper-looking little character sitting alone at the bar. Pretty soon Judy got the idea that he looked lonesome, so she made Stan go ask him over to their table. He came over, and they talked all evening. He seemed very interested in Stan's time-machine, and he asked a lot of questions, and so on, and finally, at the end, I'll be damned if he didn't offer to pay 7,000 bucks for a one-quarter interest in Budzik Associates.

"What do you think of that, Johnny?" Judy asked proudly.

"Well, that's very fine," I said. "It certainly pays to be nice to people. I don't suppose," I added slowly, "that he had the money with him?"

Stan studied my face for quite a long time before he said anything. Apparently I'd suggested an angle that hadn't occurred to him before. "Maybe it does sound kind of odd, at that," he admitted at last, "though it didn't last night. I think he's from a rich family; the way he talked, that kind of money doesn't seem to mean anything to him."

"How many drinks did he have?" I asked.

"You're a darling," said Judy, "but you're a terrible skeptic."

"All right," I said. "Did anybody tell your wealthy friend that we haven't got the faintest idea how we can make any dough out of the machine?"

"Yes," said Stan. "I made it just as strong as I could, but it didn't faze him a bit. Says he's interested in science and he appreciates my honesty and he's perfectly willing to help us out and see what happens."

"Well, frankly, Stan," I said, "I'm a little inclined to doubt that anybody in his right mind would give seven thousand to somebody he meets in a bar out of scientific altruism. Personally, I don't recommend we spend any of that money until we see it. Let's have a beer."

Well, Harry Bottomley showed up at my tool-shop at 8:30 on

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Monday morning. He weighed, at a guess, maybe 120 pounds. He couldn't have been much over five feet tall and he was wearing a snap-brim pink straw hat, a pink sport-jacket, brown slacks and two-tone sport-shoes. He had a ridiculous little mustache on his ridiculous little lip, and all in all he was about as colorful a miniature as I can remember seeing at 8:30 on a Monday morning.

He doffed his hat. "Good morning, Miss Budzik, Mr. Budzik." He extended his hand toward me. "This would be Mr. Walter, wouldn't it?"

"It would," I said, shaking it. He released me and turned apologetically to Stan.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Budzik, but all I've got with me is twenty-five hundred. My—my broker tells me he can't get the other forty-five hundred until tomorrow." And he pulled out a fat wad of bills and started peeling them off. "I hope that's all right, sir," he added. "It was the best I could do."

"Oh, it'll do fine, Mr. Bottomley," said Stan with a side glance at me.

"Well, good," said Bottomley, obviously relieved. He looked at me. "I hope you don't have any objections to me coming in with you, Mr. Walter."

"Welcome aboard," I said, bemused.

"Thanks!" he said. "Now I get a one-quarter interest in your partnership, don't I?" He blushed. "I mean, *after* I bring the rest of the money, of course."

"That's right, Mr. Bottomley," said Stan. "It's a four-way split all the way."

Bottomley's little chest expanded visibly. "Well, that's fine," he said. "We don't need any receipts or written contracts or anything like that, as far as *I'm* concerned." He glanced at his watch. "Hey, I've got to *go*," he said, and he did.

Judy was smiling at me. "Well, Mr. Skeptical?"

I had to grin. "You win," I told her. "I guess I'm the one who's crazy."

Stan was already on the phone, ordering materials.

Harry was back about noon on Tuesday with forty-five hundred dollars in the form of a cashier's check. Our first shipment had come in that morning and we were already hard at work. We welcomed Harry, told him to hang around and watch if he wanted to, and got back at it. The next few weeks were a flurry of activity. We ate on the fly, slept when we had to, and steamed right along. Pretty soon it began to take shape.

For awhile we called the gadget the T.M. (for time machine, of course), but as it began to develop we got to calling it Tim, and Tim it's remained to this day. I can't say I ever did understand the principle of the thing very

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well—Stan tried to explain it to me once, but he left me 'way behind before he even got through defining a tesseract. Me, I'm strictly a jack-leg mechanic; I play a pretty fair welding-torch and I've spent a good part of my life making things fit that aren't supposed to, but Stan's the genius of the outfit and I leave the math and all that jazz to him. We've worked together before. Judy acted as phone-answerer, coffee, beer and sandwich runner-after, and general housemother for the organization.

We spent the first few weeks on the wiring, and I won't deny it was pretty complicated. The inner walls consisted of several layers of thick sheet plastic in which we encased the wiring by hand with a welding torch—a cheap method we'd worked out long before, the result being as fixed as a printed circuit. The outside of Tim looked like a walk-in safe, which is not surprising, because that's what it had been in its younger day. We bought it from the receiver of a defunct savings-and-loan outfit.

Meanwhile Harry was with us every day. To hear him talk, he was very deep in the stock-market, but where he found the time for these big manipulations of his was a mystery to us. He always wore the same gaudy clothes, too. If we hadn't known he was loaded we'd have suspected they were the only clothes he had. There wasn't much he could do to help around the shop, although I must say that he was useful when we needed to move something heavy. For all his size he was as strong as a bumperjack.

Most of the time, he sat around chatting with Judy or just watching her from a distance, not saying anything. It seemed to be a real poisonous case of unrequited love—you couldn't help feeling sorry for him. Judy's too much of an idealist to go for any guy just because he's rich. She was *nice* to him, you understand, but there's a difference. It was a haunting situation, in a way, because they certainly looked like Mutt and Jeff.

As it happened, Harry was out somewhere the day his brother came to call. Right away I didn't like the guy; he was a compact-looking brute with a bullet-head and overstuffed muscles, maybe five foot ten. He was flushed and sort of sullen; in fact, he looked to be about half plotzed already, this being about 11 in the A.M. As it turned out, this was the customary condition of brother George, *any* time of the day.

"I'm George Bottomley," he informed us. "Where's my brother Harry?"

I tilted up my mask. "Why, Harry stepped out for a few minutes," I said. "Make yourself comfortable; he should be along shortly."

George nodded. "This must be the place," he said, looking around at the clutter. "It's just like that

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stupid little bastard to give his money to a bunch of screw-balls." He fixed me with a wavering eye. "So *you're* the guys who took all his dough away from him."

I put down the torch and stood up. Stan and Judy were standing already, staring tensely at him. "Now *wait* a minute, friend," I said. "Not so fast. Harry invested in our company, sure, but he did it of his own free will. We *told* him what the odds were on—"

George's flushed face turned a shade darker. "Free will, hell! He isn't responsible, and you know it. The old lady left him half her money and Harry gave it to you—every cent he had."

"There must be some mistake," said Stan, puzzled. "Why, Harry's rich. He made over twelve thousand on the market just last week."

"Is *that* what he told you?" George laughed thickly. "Well, that sounds like Harry, all right."

"Hi," said Harry, coming through the door. Then he saw his brother and stopped short. I saw him lick his lips and look hastily around. As a matter of fact, he looked a little scared. "H—hello, George," he faltered.

George came right to the point. "Harry, I need fifty bucks. Now."

Harry looked distressed. "I gave you fifty last week."

"I need fifty more."

"But George, I don't *have*—" He broke off suddenly, looking at us.

George's face seemed to harden. "It's up to you, Harry," he said ominously, moving toward him. Harry's eyes got all frightened and he put up his hands protectively. "You want me to do like I used to, when we were kids?" purred George, closing in. Quick as a snake his left hand shot out and gathered up Harry's lapels. Then, holding the struggling little man at arms length, George slapped him hard across the face twice, forehand and back-hand. "There, you little sissy," he said with a grunt. "Go tell ma I hit you."

Stan gasped and Judy let out a little scream. Me, I'm more practical; I picked up a wrench.

"No, *please*, Johnny," said Harry quickly, tears in his eyes. "Don't get mixed up in this. You'll just make it worse." He really seemed to mean it, so I stopped. He wiggled himself out of his brother's grasp and began patting himself helplessly about the pockets. "I—I don't have fifty on me, right now," he said piteously. "Do you suppose I could borrow that much from the cash-box?"

I looked at Stan for a moment. It was, after all, Harry's money. I dug out the fifty and handed it over. George took the money, counted it, and departed without another word. There was an ugly silence in the room after he was gone. Harry stared hotly at the floor, and Judy seemed to be pretty close to tears.

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Personally, I couldn't stand the atmosphere. I got my hat and told Stan I was taking the rest of the day off. Then I went to the courthouse and started looking up probate files. It wasn't a difficult estate to find, and the records told the whole story. Harry *had* lied; his family wasn't rich at all. Bridget Bottomley, widow, had died six months before, leaving her whole estate to her sons George and Harry in equal shares, the amount being $7,220 per share. Apparently George had gone through his share already—it was easy enough to guess how. Harry had given his whole inheritance to us. And that was that.

"Why, that crazy little fool," said Stan that night, when I'd reported on what I'd learned. "Why would he do such a thing, do you suppose?"

I shrugged. "Maybe he was lonesome. He doesn't seem to have any friends. Maybe it was worth seven thousand bucks to him, just to be part of a gang. His mother's gone, and that brother of his certainly can't be much comfort to him."

Stan looked thoughtful.

"Sometimes you kind of surprise me, Johnny."

"I know," I said. "I'm the Sigmund Freud of the pool-hall set."

"Look," said Judy, "suppose we get up off the analyst's couch for a second and figure out what we can do about it."

"What *can* we do?" asked Stan. "We've spent most of his money on materials. We can't give it back now. It's practically all gone."

"I'll tell you what we can do," I said. "We can think up some way to make money out of Tim—at least enough to give Harry his investment back."

Stan sighed. "Well, we'll try to think of something. Tim ought to be ready to test out in a few days. I've got the control mechanism pretty well whipped. Maybe when we see it work we'll get some ideas. I'll order the mice tomorrow."

"Mice," said Judy with revulsion. "What in the world do you want mice for?"

"For the tests," he explained. "We've got to find out whether living creatures can survive a time-skip."

"Do we have to use *mice*?" she said, shuddering.

"We won't let them hurt you, Judy," I told her. "We'll keep 'em on a leash."

The mice arrived two days later, and Judy squealed around acting repulsive, and Harry was sufficiently recovered by then to become her protector in the matter of mice. He took over the mouse department in fine shape; he was, in fact, so big-brotherly about the whole thing that it would have been funny, if it hadn't been so pathetic. He played with those

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mice, and fed them, and acted generally like a kid for the next couple of days, until we had Tim ready to test.

Finally, Stan assembled the company and made a little speech. "In our first test we'll put in an hour-glass and two mice," he said. "For the moment we're only trying to prove that time can be skipped, so I've set Tim up for twenty-four hours. If my computations are right the objects in the machine will skip twenty-four hours of time. I haven't put in any switches except the one main switch because it's simpler to activate all the circuits at once, just by closing the door."

"In other words, we'll have to wait twenty-four hours to see the results of the first test?" I put in.

"That's right. All of the objects inside Tim should jump instantaneously twenty-four hours into the future. As to what the effect will be—well, that's what we're testing to find out."

He swung open Tim's big door and threw on the power. "Get two mice, will you, Johnny?" he asked over his shoulder.

"I'll get 'em," volunteered Harry. He scurried over and took down the cage. "Here they are—oops," he said. "Gee, I dropped one."

Judy promptly commenced to scream. "It's *loose*," she panted, standing panic-stricken in the middle of the room.

"I've got *one*," said Harry. "Golly, I'm sorry, Mr. Budzik. It wiggled out of my hand."

"That's all right, Harry," said Stan. "Just put the one you've got into Tim. We'll catch the other one in a second."

Harry trotted over to Tim. I had seen a mouse run under a bench and I started stalking it. Judy kept wailing something or other.

Well, it's strange how things can happen. Stan grabbed a broom and jabbed it under the bench. He flushed his mouse, all right. It ran straight at Judy, who shrieked, snatched up her skirt, spun alluringly, and ran. Unfortunately she ran away from the mouse at the same time that I started toward it, and we collided with sickening violence. Judy's no light-weight; she hit my midsection like a low-flung medicine-ball. We went down together in a heap. As we fell my full weight slammed into Tim's heavy door and started it swinging shut. Stan dropped the broom and made a frantic dive for the door, but he was too late. The door clicked shut, all the lights dimmed, and Tim began to hum.

"Uh-oh," I said, struggling to get untangled from Judy.

"My God," said Stan.

Judy and I stopped struggling to stare at him. There was no color at all in Stan's face. He pointed a trembling finger at Tim. "Harry's in there."

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"Oh, *no!*" said Judy.

"Well, cripe, let's get him out," I said, coming to my feet. Stan shook his head, his lips pursed. "Not a chance," he said. "He's in another—well, dimension, I suppose you'd call it. Tim's pre-set for twenty-four hours. I don't know *what* would happen if we broke the field now, before the full time is up. I'd be afraid to try it."

There was a grim silence devoted to pulling ourselves together.

"That poor little devil," Stan said softly.

"It's my fault," said Judy.

"Mine too," I said. "Don't feel bad, Stan. Maybe he'll be okay."

"Maybe," said Stan, "and maybe not. We should test a thing like this for *months* before we put a person in it. I hope," he added heavily, "that nobody'll think we did it to get rid of him, now that we've used up his money."

Judy looked at him with distaste. "Now *there's* a lovely idea."

"Look, you two," I told them. "There isn't a thing in the world we can do except wait it out, so what do you say we do just that—preferably in silence."

"We can pray," said Stan. "Does anybody know any prayers?"

I hope I never have to go through another day like that one. We felt so guilty we couldn't even look at each other. We tried to eat and we couldn't swallow. I tried to take a nap, but I found I couldn't keep my eyes closed. Finally, we just sat there and smoked cigarettes and chewed our fingernails down to the flesh. It was awful.

However, the twenty-four hours finally dragged by, as all things will if you wait long enough. The indicator crept imperceptibly up the circle and finally stopped at twenty-four. Tim clicked and stopped humming, and all the lights seemed to brighten. Stan and I ran to the machine and swung open the door.

There stood Harry, still clutching his mouse. He had his mouth open, as though he was right in the middle of a scream. He blinked at us, bewildered, and we blinked right back at him. It was the same little Harry in his neat-fitting pink jacket and his two-tone shoes.

The trouble was, he was about two and a half feet tall!

Everything inside Tim had shrunk in the same proportion. Harry's clothes, even the mouse in Harry's hands was about half-size.

Harry looked up at us for a long time. Then he looked down at himself, gave out a little sob, and scurried between us out into the shop. We stood stunned, watching him.

"He's hiding," said Stan in a heartbroken voice. We could hear Harry crying behind some boxes. "Go find him, Judy. Maybe you can make him feel better."

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I'll tell you, we felt *rotten.*

Stan began to pace the floor. "I don't get it," he kept saying. "I don't get this at all. What went wrong?" He took another turn around the room, his hands clenching and unclenching behind his back. "It's crazy," he said.

"Look, Stan," I said. "Look at Judy." She was sitting on a box holding Harry in her arms like a baby. She was rocking back and forth and crooning, and Harry was sobbing bitterly into her breast.

Stan cleared his throat noisily and started pacing again, faster this time. "There's an answer somewhere," he muttered. "Somewhere." He passed a trembling hand over his forehead. "Now why would skipping twenty-four hours of time make things shrink? Why? Why would . . ." He stopped dead, squinting at the ceiling. Then he started slapping the back of one hand into the palm of the other.

"Of course," he said. "Of course of course of course of—"

"Of course *what?*" I shouted at him.

He looked at me with a bright glitter in his eyes.

"The expanding universe," he told me.

"The what?"

"Expanding universe." He started pacing again. "Astronomers have been claiming it for years, but I never thought of it. What a hell of a splash *this* will make. Think of it, Johnny. Everything in the universe must just about double in size every twenty-four hours. It's been going on for five billion *years. Think* of it."

I tried, but it was pretty steep. "Yeah. But what happened?"

"Harry didn't shrink."

"He didn't?"

"No. *We expanded.* We expanded like we always do every twenty-four hours—like everything does every twenty-four hours. Only Harry didn't, because he *skipped* that twenty-four hours."

Harry slipped from Judy's lap and ran over to Stan. He tugged at Stan's pant-leg and turned up a tear-stained face.

"*Please,* Mr. Budzik," he said in a squeaky little voice. "Please, you've *got* to find a way to get me back to where I was. You've just *got* to. I was so small before that everybody hated me. Now I'm—a *freak!*" He buried his head in his hands and cried in racking sobs.

Absently, Stan stooped a little and patted him on the head. "Don't you worry, Harry. We'll fix you up as good as new."

"Come here, Harry," said Judy in a strange, gentle voice I'd never heard her use before. "Come to Judy." He ran to her like a baby.

"Stan," I asked softly, "can you fix him up?"

"Certainly," he told me. "We'll just reverse the process."

"What process?"

"The time-skip," he explained.

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"Harry got to be his apparent half-size because everything else doubled in size during that twenty-four hours. Now, if we can time-skip *back* twenty-four hours we'll have him right where he started."

"You mean go backwards in time? Look, Stan, are you sure you know what you're doing? How can we put Harry into the past? The past has already *been*."

"It's all right, Johnny," he said patiently. "You see, tomorrow, today will be yesterday."

Stan decided to start from scratch and build a whole new control mechanism. "It'll be easier than reversing all the circuits on the old one," he told me. "Besides, this way we'll have one unit for skipping forward in time and another unit for skipping backward in time." He glanced at Harry and lowered his voice. "Heartless as this may sound, we seem to have established that Tim works, anyway."

We coaxed Harry away from Judy long enough to measure him all over, so we'd know where we stood. He was just over two and a half feet tall; he'd been five foot one, he told us in his squeaky little voice. He'd shrunk to just about half of his former size. Otherwise he seemed perfectly healthy. But sad. Oh, I mean *he was sad*. We felt responsible for him and tremendously sorry for him, but you know, it's funny, I think both Stan and I sort of hated him during that period. He was so pathetic we dreaded to look at him.

It took about a week to build the new control mechanism, and it was one miserable week. Harry flatly refused to leave the toolshop at all, so the whole bunch of us ended up moving in. It was a kind of a nightmare period, when night and day were indistinguishable from each other—a jumble of work and coffee and gulped hamburgers, and sleeplessness and worry and fatigue, driven on by the racking pathos in Harry's tiny little eyes.

All during this time Judy took care of Harry like he was her first-born. For the first couple of days he sat on her lap and cried most of the time. It's a sight I'll never forget—this tiny mature man sitting on Judy's lap with his feet hanging down in those dapper, two-tone shoes. His little red-rimmed eyes were a constant haunting reproach to us and drove us to exhaustion. Toward the end even Judy began to complain. She said if we thought he wasn't heavy, we ought to sit him on *our* laps for awhile. Stan blinked thoughtfully, but he didn't say anything—just went right on working.

Then one day Stan straightened up. "That does it, I think," he said wearily.

"What happens now, Stan?" I asked him.

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"Watch and see." Stan fastened his eyes on the wall clock. "Today is Wednesday the 17th. It is now 10 A.M." His eyes seemed to unfocus slightly, as though he were looking into space. "Tomorrow, the 18th, at 10 A.M., I will pre-set the *back* control for twenty-four hours and put Harry Bottomley into Tim."

"Stan," I asked, intrigued by his manner, "who do you think you're talking to—God?"

He stared at me without noticeable amusement. "Maybe I am," he said thoughtfully. Then he turned to look at Tim.

And, at that moment, a new Harry Bottomley, complete with pink sport jacket and two-tone shoes, stepped out of Tim. Stan quickly closed the door and turned to gape. We *all* gaped. *This* Harry Bottomley was easily six foot four—maybe more.

He stood there looking at all of us with a happy smile on his big face. "Hi, folks," he said in a deep bass voice.

I couldn't believe my eyes. I swivelled around to look for little Harry. He was there, all right, sitting on Judy's lap, staring goggle-eyed at this giant version of himself. Judy was staring, too. The look on her face could only be described as "calculating."

"Two Harry Bottomleys," I said aloud, trying to get used to the idea. *"Two Harry Bottomleys?"*

I started to study the new Harry carefully, trying to pin down what was so different about him. He was an exact copy of little Harry in every respect except size. But his eyes—*then* I saw it. It was a different expression around the eyes, I thought. Little Harry always looked vaguely forlorn, but there was nothing forlorn-looking about big Harry. He looked imposing, rather, and strikingly handsome. The set of his massive shoulders, the compact way he held himself—that's where he was different. He radiated self-confidence.

Big Harry was really a good-looking guy

Stan looked as puzzled as I felt. He walked in front of big Harry and stared up at him. "Harry," he said, "how did you get so big?"

Big Harry only grinned and shrugged his massive shoulders. "I don't know, Stan," he boomed, "But I like it." And he walked over and sat down on a box next to Judy. He moved with an easy masculine grace, like John Wayne.

I tugged at Stan's sleeve. "Stan," I asked, "how did we get two Harrys?"

Stan eyed me blankly. "How did he get so big?" he wanted to know.

"Look, Stan, let's take the questions one at a time. How can there be *two* of anybody?"

Stan was a million miles away. "I don't get this at all," he said, talking to himself. "Could it be the

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universe doesn't expand evenly? Does it do it in spurts, maybe?"

I tugged his sleeve again. "Stan, tell me the truth. Did you *expect* two Harry Bottomleys?"

He looked at me absently. "Of course," he said. "This is a *reverse*-time process. He has to come out of Tim before he goes in, so naturally we have two of him for a period—in this case, twenty-four hours."

"Stan, look over there. Look at the Harrys."

Big Harry was smiling down at little Harry and seemed to be about to pat him on the back.

"Should they do that?" I asked urgently. "Isn't it dangerous for them to get so close? Won't they —*merge*, or something?"

Stan looked puzzled. "Why should they merge?"

"Well, they're the same person, aren't they?"

"In a way, they are," he said. "Except for the time element and the divergence in size, they're just about identical."

"What do you mean, the time element?"

Stan roused himself to answer the question. "Nothing material can be defined except in terms of time, Johnny," he said. "It's a dynamic world and everything is always in a state of change. How can I tell how high something is, and how wide and how deep, unless I also know *when* I'm talking about. I've got to determine the fourth dimension, too, you see, which is time. Otherwise my data is incomplete. See?"

"No."

"All right. Are you the same person you were a year ago?"

"I'm the same *person*," I said.

"But not the identical person, right? Everything that's happened to you during the last year has changed you. Everything you've thought, even."

"I guess so," I admitted.

"All right then. If that idea applies to a year, it should logically apply to a day, shouldn't it?"

"I suppose so."

"Well, big Harry is a day older than little Harry, so he's not the same person. You see?"

I thought this over doubtfully. "I don't know, Stan," I said.

We turned to look at the Harrys again. It was the strangest family group I ever hope to see. Little Harry was beaming up at big Harry, and big Harry was looking down at little Harry like a man might look at his son. Judy was gazing raptly at both of them; she had a soft, really beautiful look on her face, like a Madonna.

Stan rubbed the back of his neck. "I'm damned if I can see how he got so big," he said.

Stan told me there was nothing anybody could do until 10 o'clock the next morning when we would put little Harry into Tim. I was so beat that I slept during most of it.

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Judy sat in a corner holding little Harry on her lap while she and big Harry quietly visited with each other. Apparently I wasn't even in the room, as far as she was concerned, and I felt just the faintest bit riled about it. I went to sleep wondering at myself.

The next thing I knew, Stan was shaking me violently. "Johnny, wake up! Wake *up!* Hurry."

I sat up. Stan's face was stark-white. "Harry's disappeared." There was an electric quality in his voice that ruffled the hair on my neck.

"Which Harry?"

"Little Harry. We've got to find him. It's almost ten. . . . You look downstairs. Judy and Harry, go on outside—look up and down the street. I'll check the alley. I've already ransacked this room."

"Stan," I asked. "What happens if we don't find him?"

"I don't know," he said, "but I'm scared. If we don't get that little rat into Tim by 10 o'clock, we'll have a paradox on our hands."

"A paradox?"

"Don't ask questions—*get going!*"

I clattered downstairs and started rummaging through junk. I could see right away that he wasn't there, so I ran back upstairs. The shop was empty except for big Harry, who was sitting with his feet up, reading a newspaper.

"Why aren't you looking?" I demanded, shocked.

He looked up at me with a kind of good-natured amusement, while I just stood there and stared at him. I didn't know exactly what to expect, but it was almost 10 o'clock and I figured if he was going to vanish, or something, I at least wanted to see it happen.

Then Stan came in the back door and Judy ran in the front.

"Stan," I said, pointing to Harry, "this big gorilla won't help."

Stan came to a stop and stared fixedly at big Harry. He began to smile; then he dropped into a chair, slapped his forehead, and started to laugh. Big Harry grinned back at him.

Judy and I looked from one to the other. "Will one of you hyenas tell me what the hell's going on?" I demanded.

Stan looked up at me and his smile faded. "I'm sorry, Johnny," he said. "I was just as fooled as you were." He turned to Harry. "Where is he?"

Harry raised his heavy voice. "Okay, Harry, you can come out now."

Little Harry's head popped inquisitively out of a ventilator shaft.

"It's okay, Harry," said Stan, and he watched while the little fellow climbed into Judy's lap and clung to her. Then he said to big Harry, "What time do we put him into Tim?"

"Well, the way it happened before," said big Harry, "you meas-

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ured me and figured it all out."

"Happened *before?*" I said. "*What* happened before?"

"*This* did." Stan pointed at big Harry. "At least, to him, it did. Big Harry lived all through this once before, when he was little Harry. Naturally, he remembers all about it."

I rubbed my nose. "What happened to the paradox?"

Stan smiled sadly. "There wasn't any paradox. I doubt if there can *be* a paradox. I just went off half-cocked, I guess. I haven't had much sleep lately." He stood up and pulled a tape out of his pocket. "Stand up, Harry. I want to measure you."

Big Harry came to his feet with massive grace.

"Stan, I'm pretty lost," I complained. "Why are you doing that?"

"To find out how much extra time to give little Harry when I put him into Tim." He held up the tape.

"Extra time?" I asked blankly.

"Sure," said Stan. "That's how big Harry got so big." He checked his tape. "Six feet four and a quarter inches," he announced. "That's a fifteen and a quarter inch increase over his original height." He sat down and scribbled on a scratch-pad. "I make it—about six extra hours. Little Harry was supposed to go in at ten this morning. We'll put him into Tim at four o'clock this afternoon. Right, Harry?"

Big Harry smiled. "It must be right, Stan," he said. "You're the inventor."

At four that afternoon Stan swung Tim open and said, "Okay, Harry. Time to go."

Little Harry slid obediently off Judy's lap and walked toward Tim.

"Wait," said Judy suddenly, her face an unreadable mask. She ran across the room and kneeled in front of the little man. "Good-bye, little Harry," she said softly. "I'm going to miss you." Her voice broke. "I'll always love you," she said, and she kissed him.

Little Harry stood looking up at her for a moment with his familiar forlorn expression. and he put up a tiny hand to touch her face. Then the word penetrated. He broke out in a smile—a *different* smile—a smile of gallant confidence. As a matter of fact, it was the identical smile big Harry had been wearing when he stepped out of Tim the day before. The little man grinned gaily at all of us for a moment. Then he squared his tiny shoulders and swaggered into Tim like a miniature John Wayne.

There was quite a long silence. Slowly Judy turned to look at big Harry. Her eyes were brimming with tears, but there was an almost incredible happiness in her face. For the first time, Judy really seemed beautiful to me.

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Big Harry cleared his throat. "There's something I'd like to say," he said, and we turned to face him. He looked defiant.

"I'm a fraud," he said firmly. "I told you I was rich. Well, I'm not. I'm a hell of a liar, if you want to know the truth. The seven thousand dollars I put into Budzik Associates was all I had."

We smiled at him.

"We know that, Harry," I told him. "We've known it for almost two weeks."

Harry was looking from face to face. "You knew?" He looked at Judy. "Is it all right Judy—that I'm not rich, I mean?"

Judy smiled her wonderful new smile. "It's all right, Harry," she said gently.

Harry took a deep breath and squared his shoulders. "How much money have we got in the till?"

I went to the strong-box and counted it.

"Three hundred and thirty one bucks," I announced.

Harry looked at the ceiling and calculated. "Do you suppose I could borrow two hundred and fifty of it?"

"Hell, Harry, it's yours anyway," I said. "Take it all."

"No," he said. "It belongs to Budzik Associates. Besides, you guys'll need something to live on for the next few days. I'll take two fifty but only as a loan."

I counted out two and a half and handed it to him.

"You going someplace, Harry?" Stan asked.

Harry and Judy exchanged glances, and Harry said, "Well, first I'm going to buy some decent clothes, and then Judy and I are going out to celebrate a little." He hesitated. "You fellows wouldn't like to come along, would you?"

Stan looked interested. "Why, we might . . ."

I cut in hastily. "You kids go on ahead. We're pretty tired."

Judy ran to us. "You're a darling, Johnny," she said impulsively, kissing me. Then she kissed Stan. "I love you both." She ran to the door.

"So long," said Harry, and then they were gone. They certainly made a handsome couple.

"Now what was *that* all about?" Stan asked wonderingly.

"Why, I think your sister has got herself a fella," I told him.

He looked shocked. "Harry?" he said incredulously.

"Yep." I went to the refrigerator, uncorked two beers, and handed him one. I felt a little sad and very good, both at the same time. I raised my bottle. "Well, here's to the happy couple."

Stan didn't move. "Johnny, how—how do *you* feel about it—about Judy and Harry?"

I sat down. "I feel fine about it. Why?"

Stan scratched his head. "I always had the idea that maybe someday *you* and Judy . . ."

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"Judy wasn't for me, Stan," I told him. "We'd never have hit it off. No, Harry's the boy for Judy. Did you ever see such a change in a guy in your life?"

He shook his head slowly and sat down.

"He's a man now," I commented. "Give him something to fight besides himself and I wouldn't be surprised if he turned out to be a credit to us all."

Stan nodded slowly. "It certainly is amazing what a difference a little extra size can make."

"Oh, size isn't all of it, by a long shot," I said. "Hell, Stan, the world is full of little guys who adapt to it all right. Maybe some of 'em are sensitive about it—everybody's sensitive about *something*."

"You have to admit that being taller certainly changed his personality."

"A lot of things happened to Harry besides getting bigger," I pointed out. "Harry was miserable because he was convinced nobody liked him, and he was such a cockroach about the whole thing that nobody *could*. What he learned during this whole process was that Judy loved him. She's a beautiful girl and the lady of his choice and she loves him. A thing like that can make all the difference, sometimes."

"All right," Stan said. "I still don't see why Judy went all overboard for *him*. It isn't like her to go all mushy just because he got to be a big hunk of muscle all of a sudden."

"That one's easy," I said. "He's a big commanding good-looking guy now, but I don't think that has much to do with how Judy feels about him. Unless I'm nuts, Judy will always treasure the memory of the tiny little fellow she rocked and soothed when he was scared and confused and very, very lost. She'll be proud of him as a man, but I think she'll love him for the other reason."

We sat there for quite awhile without saying anything. Then I said, "My God, what a love-match that'll be. A Freudian would pop his cork just thinking about it. For a whole week she was his mother and he was her baby. Now he'll be her husband and she'll be his wife."

Stan looked at me. "You seem pretty sure they'll get married?" I thought of how Judy looked as they were leaving.

"They'd *better* get married," I said.

Sure enough, we got a call about midnight. They were in a little burg somewhere across the state line and they'd been married about twenty minutes. They sounded ecstatically happy.

We didn't expect to see them for a week or so, but they came back to the shop about noon the next day.

"Not much honeymoon," I said.

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"We'll take one later," said Harry, getting all businesslike. "Right now we've got to get Budzik Associates going. Let's clean this joint up a little, okay? We're having company."

"Company?" Stan asked. "Who?"

"Friend of Judy's," said Harry shortly, picking up a broom.

"It's Tommy Nielson," put in Judy. "You remember Tommy, Stan—he's that psychiatrist I used to date. He's the boy who always told me I was frustrated."

"Oh, sure," said Stan vaguely.

"Well, we were just over to his office. He's coming over this afternoon. We told him we'd demonstrate Tim for him. Come on, Johnny, how about picking up some of these empty beer-bottles?"

Stan was rubbing the back of his neck. "Well now, what—"

"Don't worry, Stan," interrupted Judy. "Harry's got it all figured out. We're going to be rich."

Dr. Nielson arrived at two, bearing his skepticism like a picket-sign. He looked like a man who couldn't understand how in the devil he'd ever agreed to come in the first place. I could well understand how it was with him—Judy can be pretty forceful when she's got her heart set on something, and the new Harry Bottomley wouldn't be easy to say "no" to either. Well, the good doctor had obviously come to scoff, but in the end he stayed to admire. It took several quick demonstrations to convince him that Tim wasn't a hoax, but he finally had to believe the evidence of his eyes. He ended up examining Harry, and finding him in perfect health he got so enthused that he went through Tim himself, on a short trip. He came out a fine figure of a doctor, too—six foot three, he was, in his socks.

"You've got a gold-mine here," he pronounced, as soon as we could pry him away from the mirror. "Off-hand I can think of twenty patients that a thing like this would help tremendously. It won't solve any deep-rooted problems, but it could certainly do wonders for surface symptoms and general self-confidence. If you people intend to go on with this, you'll never lack for customers. And you'll be able to set your own price."

"We figure it this way, doctor," said Harry, by "we" meaning himself, I guess. "Our clientele will probably be well-to-do, for the most part, so we think we ought to move Tim uptown, where we can give the operation a little class."

"Can't do any harm," agreed the doctor.

"I wonder," Harry went on, "if you'd know where we could borrow maybe a thousand dollars or so, to get set up?"

Without a word the doctor sat down, extracted his check-book, and wrote out a check for a thou-

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sand dollars. "There," he said, handing it to Harry. "You find yourselves a suitable office uptown and give me a call when you're ready to start."

"To tell you the truth," said Harry, "I already rented a place."

And that was the beginning of Budzik Associates. One week later we opened for business in one of those sedate, classy brownstones that front on the street. We processed six clients the first day, which was the leanest day we've ever had.

That boy Harry turned out to be a business genius. You should see the operation he set up. A rich little guy keeps his appointment and comes to the door. He's met by Judy, who takes his hat and cane and gloves, ushers him into a quiet, pleasant lounge and hands him a cocktail. Then he has the usual pleasure of watching a slightly larger version of himself walk out of Tim and depart to do his work for him. The customer sits in convivial comfort for awhile; then at the proper time Judy hands him back his hat, cane and gloves and inserts him into Tim. It makes a nice rest for the busy executive and was soon very popular with the carriage trade.

We increase these little guys an inch at a time at three month intervals, so it won't be too noticeable, and as we charge a thousand dollars an inch it only took us a few days to become solvent. We gave Harry and the doctor their money back before the end of the first week, and from that point on it's been pure gravy. We are, in fact, wealthy already.

A few weeks ago brother George paid us his second visit. Judy answered the doorbell; a moment later she came into the lounge. She had a strained and worried look on her face.

"Harry," she said hesitantly, "it's your brother George. He says he heard you struck it rich. He says if you're not out there in one minute with five hundred dollars he'll break in and mop up the floor with you."

An expression of infinite delight stole over Harry's big face. He put down his coffee cup and came to his feet. "*Well,*" he said, slamming one ham-like fist into the other hand. "Brother George, eh? I guess I'd better go have a little talk with him."

Judy seemed to light up. She followed Harry into the hall just as Stan came in from the back room.

"Come on, Stan," I told him hurriedly, "let's go see the fun. George is here. Harry's gone out to clean his clock for him."

Stan turned white. "My God," he said urgently, "we've got to stop it. Harry'll get killed!"

I stared at him. "What are you talking about, Stan? Harry's big enough to handle . . ."

"He *isn't*, though. He's big, yes,

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but his *mass* hasn't changed. Don't you see, Johnny? When the universe expands, it's just a process of diffusion. Harry doesn't know it yet but he still weighs a hundred and twenty pounds." Stan started for the door. "Come on, maybe we can . . ."

It was too late. Judy and Harry came into the room. Judy was laughing so hard that the tears streamed down her cheeks. She collapsed into a chair. Harry wore a pleased, slightly embarrassed look. There didn't seem to be a mark on him.

Judy wiped her eyes. "You boys just missed the funniest comedy scene since Uncle Hulo tangled with the lawn-sprinkler."

"What happened?"

"All Harry had to do was walk out the door," she giggled. "George looked up at him, and his eyes got round and his face went sort of gray, and then he started to back away . . ." She couldn't go on.

"I guess George forgot he was standing on a stoop," said Harry cheerfully. "He fell backwards down the stairs. Then he picked himself up and he just—walked away."

"Talking to himself," finished Judy. "He walked off shaking his head and talking to himself." She heaved a big sigh.

"A few more shocks like that one," Harry grinned, "and George might even take the pledge."

"Harry," began Stan, but I managed to shush him in time. I led him to the other end of the room. "Look, Stan," I said, sotto voice, "take my advice and don't tell him."

"But, Johnny, suppose he gets in a fight or something. . . ?"

"Who'd want to fight with a monster like Harry?"

"He'll find out anyway," protested Stan. "Sooner or later he'll get on a scale and weigh himself—"

"That'll be time enough," I said. "Maybe, by then, he'll be used to having people jump when he looks at 'em."

We looked across the room. Judy, on tiptoe, was kissing her husband on the cheek. She glanced at us. "My hero," she said in a soft, bantering voice, but there was no mistaking the pride in her lovely eyes when she said it.

Harry looked down at her for a second; then he winked at us.

Like I say, it's what you believe that counts in this world.

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A Goom space-suit, said the board of directors, could become the fashion plate of the star-minded. A Goom business *suit said the enraged company president, was fashion plate enough. And during all this talk, the president's nephew was sending . . .*

Rabbits to the Moon

by Raymond E. Banks

THEY WERE GOING TO give the tired old man one more chance, he thought. They have me pushed to the wall, but they had better be careful when they get a type like me against the wall.

He lit a cigar with rock-steady hands, peering down the table, watching for the effect of his tired old hands being so rock-steady.

"Careful, gentlemen," he said, "that you don't arouse me. You'll find yourselves with an enraged Goom on your hands."

They stared back at him coldly.

He put down the fresh-lit cigar and saw that he already had another fresh-lit cigar in front of him. That totaled two cigars he was smoking at once. Under some conditions this could be a sign of nervousness.

"Mr. Goom," said Mr. Cutter, his voice patient as if speaking to a child, "you have your choice of becoming Chairman of the Board or leaving the Company. I am sorry, but we of the Goom Looms value the Company too much to miss the great opportunity offered us."

Reginald Goom picked up one of his cigars and puffed. He set it down with a flourish.

"Space-suits," he snorted. "The Goom Looms has always been a small, adequate textile plant. As a sub-contractor on space-suits we would simply become an appendage of Triumphant Textiles. No—we will not become greedy. I have resisted women's slacks. I have resisted pajamas. Now I resist space-suits. Fine business suits for progressive men—that's the objective of the Goom Looms, as it was in my father's time and shall always be."

Absently he pulled out his silver

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cigar case and extracted a cigar. The weight of the cigar lighter, made of beaten silver, felt good in his hand. He lit his cigar and blasted a twirl of Havana blue down the conference table.

Mr. Cutter rose, his eyes glittering. "Gentlemen, it is now time to vote. I think we ought to have more modern management and a new president of Goom Looms who will lead us into the haven of the space-suit contract. There is no reason why a Goom space-suit cannot become the fashion plate of the star-minded. I call for a vote!"

Reginald Goom glared at Cutter. Cutter had a piece of lint on the lapel of his gabardine Goom, an obvious sign of a careless and pedestrian mind.

"Wait—" he said. "I don't think you gentlemen quite have control of the Company. I am voting the shares of Mr. Mullen, my cousin."

"Mr. Mullen's proxy is out of date," said Cutter. "And if you continue lighting cigars at your present frequency, the Company will shortly be bankrupt."

Goom stared down in horror at the three lit cigars in front of him. He *was* getting senile. The moment he had always feared had come. Not in the privacy of his bachelor quarters, but right at the conference table during the most important moment in all his life.

He raised his eyes to the picture of his father, smiling down from the tan, fashionable walls. "Always keep our textile plant small but adequate," that gentleman had said. "Always remember that the best comes in small quantities. If you can design a new lapel in your time—that is a full life for you. Let the big money go. When the big money comes, a whole troop of money-monkeys follow."

Goom stared down the conference table. He could see the difference on their faces. They were getting the money-monkey look. And he was getting senile. The tiny textile plant was coming, like all good things, to an end.

But Reginald Goom wasn't going out without a battle. "Dick Mullen always sends me a proxy every year," he said.

"Where is it?" asked Cutter.

"Since he is on the Moon at present, it will take about two weeks to get it," said Goom. Now his hands *were* trembling. Now he did feel a little sick.

"But you see," said Cutter in a tone one uses on a thick-headed child, "we must accept or reject the space-suit contract by this coming Saturday. We haven't got two weeks."

"I insist that we postpone this Board of Directors meeting for two weeks," said Goom, his heart sinking. Damn! He should've followed up on the proxy thing. He hadn't realized that Cutter had brewed a full-scale revolution under him on this silly Triumphant sub-contract.

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He blustered. He pled; he reasoned. It was no use. The vote was taken, and, without Dick Mullen's shares to vote, he lost. Even Johnson and Reed, who were true Gooms in matters of business, went against him. They wouldn't look him in the eye, but they voted against him.

"Mr. Mullen's proxy may be in the mail on the Moon rocket right now," said Goom, truly feeling the desperation of his position. "You can at least give me until Saturday to record the vote of his shares. This is the most important vote in Company history."

"No," said Cutter.

But there Johnson and Reed stood with him. It was an out. They knew it was physically impossible to get the proxies back before Saturday. "There's no harm in re-voting on Saturday," said Johnson, "and I so move". Reed seconded the motion and it carried over Cutter's objections. The money-monkeys were cruel, but they were not brutal. They still wouldn't look him in the face. They knew he was finished, and they grasped at self-respect by giving him three more days of control—as if, under the circumstances, that mattered.

They left him sitting alone in the conference room with his three cigars.

Goom stared at the three cigars, one dead, two burning. Just like the almost-extinct Goom family. Only himself, his niece and that idiot-scientist she had married.

And only three days to get to the moon, get the proxy and get back. . . .

"I sent a rabbit to the Moon last night," said Vic Webb to his wife over the morning coffee.

Virginia Webb unstuck her eyes long enough to study her husband's face.

"Bravo."

"The Webb Traveleasy is going to replace space ships entirely," said Vic. "I'm on the right track at last."

"Then you'll have to get away from rabbits," she said. "You've been sending rabbits to the moon for some months now. When do you start on people?"

Vic shook his head. "Maybe ten years, maybe twenty. A new invention takes time. We're still having a little trouble with the skeleton."

"When we're old and gray we'll be worth billions," she said. "But the most useful years of our life are spent giving free rides to rabbits. Why don't you try it on people?"

"I might try it on Uncle Goom," said Vic, "the old buzzard. The other day he refused to lend me the money for the new antennas on the Traveleasy. Five hundred dollars would have done it. That's cigar money to him."

"Leave Uncle Goom alone!" she

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cried, in surprising passion for that hour of the morning. "He's the only rich relative I've got. Without him I'd be a plain drudge married to a half-baked university professor, and starving."

"This is divorce?" asked Vic.

Virginia subsided. "Don't be a fool. It's only that—well—you're so goddam impractical, if I may coin a term. Your Traveleasy is worth millions in its present state, but only you and that silly Doctor Pitch on the moon know about it."

"Science evolves. It does not explode."

"Yesterday," said Virginia, "the riding lights fell off our aircar. What do you propose to do about that, Doctor Webb? There is also a small matter of two hundred from my last pregnancy still due the hospital. They have threatened to repossess our child. I trust these minor matters will somehow be taken care of."

Vic sighed. He kissed her. "I love you," he said.

She sighed. "But of course," she said. "We will speak no more of it." During the kiss her slim graceful fingers plucked out his slim, graceful wallet. A woman, even a wife, has to live.

From the cloud of cigar smoke, Uncle Goom's voice rang out.

"What's this?" he asked, tapping a part of the machine with his cane.

"Please don't bang the equipment with your cane," said Vic coldly. "That's a printed circuit, and if you jumble it I will be translating rabbit fur into sanskrit."

"So you've been sending rabbits to the moon," said Uncle Goom. He flicked his cigar ash, and Vic with a cry blew the blasphemous ash from the precious machined parts.

"Yes," said Vic, controlling himself. "And I need five hundred dollars to keep on with it. I wouldn't have told you, but I've simply got to have some money."

Reginald Goom recoiled. The expansive gleam in his eye sank to a lesser intensity.

"For that thing? It looks like a television camera."

"It scans," said Vic. "It breaks the flesh down into light rays which it sends through space at the speed, of course, of light. I've figured that I can send a man to the moon for $68.14 in a matter of seconds. No long waiting. None of that gravity distress. No worry about hitting meteors. $68.14 instead of the five hundred dollars it costs now. So if you could lend me a little—"

"Wait a minute," said Uncle Goom. "First we're talking about science, and all of a sudden we're talking about money, which slipped in a little fast. Let's get back to your science."

"Substance," sighed Vic, and re-

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alizing all that had to be left out and simplified when you dealt with a layman, "seems impervious, but we know the solidity of matter is an illusion. Within the atom are great empty spaces—" he reverently tapped the chrome finish of his device. "Even in something as hard as metal, there is, relatively, worlds of space between the electron rings and the nucleus—as much space as in our own solar and star system—relative to electron size, of course."

"Yes, space—time," mused Uncle Goom, staring moodily at his watch.

"This has nothing to do with space or time!" cried Vic. "It has to do with reducing matter to its simplest charged particles and beaming them to the moon. A computer memorizes the complex pattern of what we send to the moon. Only recently have we had this kind of sophistication in computers."

"Ah, yes, computers," said Uncle Goom, mouthing a word he had at least seen occasionally in the papers. "Very scientific."

"Have you ever watched a cotton candy machine operate," asked Vic.

Uncle Goom backed off a little. He had never gotten used to Vic's leaps in logic.

"You've seen a man put plain sugar in a cotton candy machine," said Vic. "The sugar is spun out into a fine substance that melts to nothing in your mouth. Yet allowing for normal sugar losses, you have the same product in the end that you started with. Slightly changed in form—but nothing you'd confuse with salt or anything else. The Webb Traveleasy does this. It spins out the charged particles across space, in such a-a-widely-spaced, gossamer way that they all get through. Unlike the cotton candy, the particles are reintegrated at the other end, on the moon, and transportation is thus accomplished."

"Absolutely astounding," said Uncle Goom. "I like it."

"Except the skeleton," said Vic querulously. "My skeletons are always lagging behind and have to be reintegrated later on the moon. That's holding me up."

"What's it like without a skeleton?" asked Uncle Goom.

"Not too bad. But people wouldn't like waiting for their skeletons to arrive. That's why I need five hundred dollars—to develop a higher frequency sending antenna. At least that'll get me started on the parts. So if you could lend me a little—"

Uncle Goom was silent, frowning. Then he shrugged. "I might at that," he said, "If you'll grant me two conditions."

Vic looked surprised. Uusually Uncle Goom struggled like a tiger over lending anybody money.

"N-name them," he said hurriedly.

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"First," said Uncle Goom, "that you send me to the moon. Second, you must stop wearing your Goom gabardine in the laboratory and getting acid burns on it. The last is hardly less important than the first. A Goom fabric is a work of art."

Vic stared at him.

"You want to go to the moon?" he asked. "Right now?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Never mind. Say I am getting old and sentimental," sighed Uncle Goom, "and I want to get to the moon right now. I am willing to pay five hundred dollars to you for it. The rest is silence."

Vic shook his head. "I positively won't send you to the moon. Many fine ideas have been ruined by haste—by trying them too soon on people. This is absolutely out of the question."

Uncle Goom shook his head, in his turn. "Why should I throw good money after bad? If you did finish the Traveleasy, it would take a Ph.D. to work it, anyway."

Vic flushed. One of his sore spots was over-complexity in engineering. "*That is a lie.* I could make you or anybody a competent operator in ten minutes."

"If you've built in that kind of simplicity," said Uncle Goom, "it might be practical . . . and I might lend you more money. Prove it."

Already there was a glaze coming over Vic's eyes as his pride in design simplicity was brought into play. "Well, it's really quite simple," he said. "Positively ingenious. Now, first you—"

Uncle Goom listened patiently, hardly inhaling on his cigar. At the end, he sighed and pulled out his check book.

"You talk like you've got something practical," Uncle Goom admitted.

Vic, flushed, felt for his wallet. Easy enough to sell the old boy if you had the time—Vic gave a cry. His wallet was not there.

"Excuse me, Uncle Goom," he said, lips firming. "There's been some skulduggery in this house today!" And he took off, crunching the check in his Goom gabardine side pocket.

Uncle Goom repressed a reprimand about the way the lad treated his suit. He walked around thoughtfully tapping and banging on the machine parts of the Webb Traveleasy. He felt a tizzy tingling of his nerves. "Poor, tired old nerves," he said. He felt like he was about to drop down in an aircar too fast. The thrill of the unknown. Let Randolph Cutter and his money-monkey crew chortle over the spot he was in. A Goom never gave up. Maybe he would get to the moon and back with the proxy in time after all.

He turned on the switches quickly, felt a moment of horrid

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uncertainty like a man facing an execution. His eyes fell on his Goom, which he had removed and neatly folded on a chair nearby. "In the name of Goom Looms," he said, and stepped into the warmed up transmitter of the Webb Traveleasy.

"Biologist?" said Doctor Pitch. He was a fat, sad man with a round, sad face. "What would a biologist be doing on the moon? There's no life here under the dome, or anywhere."

Richard Mullen, thin and indignant looking, scowled.

"I," he said, "am a biologist who hates life. My family was in textiles. Instead, I went into science. I don't get along with people too well. I don't get along with animals too well. In fact, I don't care much for growing things."

He drew in a deep breath of Doctor Pitch's oxygen and stared out of the small glass air dome—the lonely, pressurized hut deep in one of the craters of the moon. The pumice waste and space-weathered rocks were restful.

"I came to the moon to invent something better than life, but I need a vacation. When I heard you were in the next dome to mine and that you had some electronic things going on, I decided to introduce myself, as I did yesterday. I rather like electronics, and I further believe that you are fooling around with a distant relative of mine, a Victor Webb."

Doctor Pitch nodded. "I am working with Webb." For a moment he looked even sadder. "My earth experience was much like yours. My people were in soap, so I took up engineering—human engineering to be exact. I taught a course at Washington Marquette: "How to be Pleasant". Then they wanted me to teach "The Practical Aspects of Being Happy." And they finally gave me a seminar in "How to get the Most out of Everybody." That was when I had my breakdown and wrote "To Hell With Everything," which was a bestseller and enabled me to come to the moon and devote my life to electronics."

Pitch waved a hand at the drab grayness of the moon landscape. "No clatter of traffic. No faculty meetings with simpering faculty politicians tearing red meat off each other. No intense young men trying to suck up knowledge only to be turned into hard dollars for chrome-plated aircars. 'No—"

Mullen wasn't listening. He stared at a jar, resting on ashelf. "What's that?"

"A rabbit," said Pitch, "and while we're on the subject, couldn't you breathe a little shallower? Oxygen costs money, you know."

"Sorry. That thing jarred me a little."

The object of Mullen's attention was a small vat which held about two quarts. Its present occu-

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pant was a puzzle. It was a silver-gray substance of uncertain consistency.

"We're having trouble with skeletons," said Pitch. "That rabbit just came in yesterday."

Two very definite rabbit eyes rose out of the jar on the surface of the creature and peered, rabbit-like, at them. Pitch poked a carrot at the mass, and the eyes vanished. A rabbit mouth appeared and chomped the carrot.

Mullen's hands trembled, but a certain delight shown in his eyes. "Now *that,*" he said, "is life with a little body english to it! What else can it do?"

Pitch sadly poured the rabbit out of the jar. It formed itself into a rabbit-like body and pittered across the floor on rabbitish pseudo-pods. It formed a nose which twitched and sniffed, and occasionally made eyes for itself to study the geography of the laboratory floor.

"A definite improvement over what we have on earth," breathed Mullen.

"Oh, Webb isn't interested in new mammalian forms," said Pitch. "He wants to transmit people with this machine. Takes the place of space ships."

"How?"

Pitch told him. "However, I can't demonstrate today as there is no transmission scheduled. But as you can see, we are having trouble with the hard calcium of the bones. The skeleton for this rabbit will be along presently, in a week or so. Then I can put it through the transceiver—that is, re-transmit it in the machine right here on the moon—and get my ordinary, garden-variety of rabbit."

Mullen watched the rabbit leap about nimbly, then form itself into something that looked like a cat and climb to a table where there was a pile of carrots.

"Generalized, unspecialized mass for a body," he breathed. "Then if you need a leg, you call on leg-memory and build up as many as you need. If you need an eye, call on eye-memory for it. The rest of the time you can sit around resting, in the form of a puddle!" He turned to Pitch triumphantly. "Why, man, this is the future! Skeletons have been holding back the human race for years. Skeletonless people could live in a house the size of a play house, by increasing their density. They could travel by making themselves into a reasonable facsimile of a bird. They could double intelligence by borrowing body cells to make brain cells during working hours. They could—"

"They won't," sniffed Pitch. "Nobody has ever seen anybody without a skeleton. As a human engineer, I assure you that a man without a skeleton would lose his job; his wife wouldn't like him any more. He wouldn't look good in a

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military uniform. He would act in unpredictable ways. This machine isn't any good until we can receive the skeleton along with the rest of the person."

An orange light glowed dimly then brightened. A whole electronic panel began to come to life, winking reds, turning to oranges and greens. There was the deep, pungent odor of ozone around the men.

"Something's happening," Mullen told Pitch, who stared in surprise.

"I have an automatic cycle on the receiver so that I can get sleep if I need to," said Pitch. "But I don't understand. There isn't supposed to be any transmission today."

A pile of something that looked like baker's dough began to form in the vat. There was the faint, but unmistakable odor of cigar smoke about it.

"Now that," said Mullen in wonder, "is a pretty fair-sized rabbit"

But Pitch wasn't watching the vat. He was throwing around his clipboards with abandon. "What's Webb up to?" he cried, his sadness approaching anger. "My carrot supply is already committed to the rabbits I have!"

The pile of dough finished growing finally. It was much, much larger than a rabbit. Mullen leaned forward curiously to examine the substance which was cooling and hardening into a clear, glassy and almost beautiful slab of jello. He poked it with his finger.

Out of the mass two bright blue human eyes appeared, staring at him angrily. Then came a mouth and with it a cigar. The mouth chomped on the cigar. The eyes swiveled around the room and finally came to rest on him again.

"Mullen," snapped a well-remembered voice, "where the hell is my proxy!"

For perhaps the only time in his adult life, Mullen's expression of anger shifted completely to one of wonder.

"Why, Cousin Goom," he gulped. "I'd hardly know you without your skel—" He felt a little faint— "Goom gabardine, that is."

Vic Webb jabbed angrily at his grapefruit. "Your Uncle Goom," he said, "has gone to the moon in the Traveleasy."

"What's wrong with that?" asked Virginia, puzzled. "You took him for five hundred, didn't you?"

"Now he wants to come back," said Vic, kicking the leg of the table.

"Naturally."

"But he's the kind that's always making scenes. He'll get me a lot of bad publicity. That's why I've restricted my transmissions to rabbits. They don't get involved with screwballism. Uncle Goom's skele-

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ton won't arrive on the moon for some time yet, maybe a week or two. If Pitch sends him back, it'll be at least a month before we can re-bone him."

"What happens in the meantime?" asked Virginia innocently. "Do they pin him on a clothes-line like a wet shirt?"

Vic found the question beneath answering. "In the meantime, I'm trying to keep him on the moon, but Pitch says he won't stay. Further, Pitch will quit if I don't take him back. Something about his being allergic to cigar smoke."

"If Uncle Goom used your invention, it was for a good reason," said Virginia. "And the only reason he ever does anything is for the good of the Goom Looms. It must be a crisis, and unless you want us to die poor, you'd better bring him back quickly."

"Publicity now would ruin my life's work," said Vic. "He stays on the moon."

Virginia sat back and studied him coolly. She really hated to have to undercut Vic, but her Goom blood sensed that something of great importance was going forward, and Uncle Goom always knew what was best for Goom Looms and the family fortune involved therein. In other words, it was time to play the woman's eternal role of effecting compromise between the two resolute men who were locked in an unyielding struggle. She concentrated intensely. Her next sentence had to be just right.

She sniffed. "Frankly, I don't think you *can* bring Uncle Goom back," she said. "The machine's too complicated."

The word had a noticeable effect on him. "The Traveleasy complicated?" he said, cheeks flushing. "My circuitry is unimpeachably simple."

She sniffed. She turned negligently to her paper. She could hear him breathing harder.

"Even an idiot could run the Traveleasy," he said, "as proved by your Uncle Goom sending himself to the moon."

"My Uncle Goom," he said quietly, "holds a BA in Weaving from a first-line university, and cannot technically be called an idiot."

Vic rattled his coffee-cup angrily, reaching for the devastating comment. "Even *you* could run the Traveleasy," he said. "But I won't show you."

"Thanks for letting me off the hook, dear. I don't have three solid weeks ahead of me, with nothing to do," she said sweetly, beginning to gather the dishes.

It would work. He would fuss at her all day, but in the end he would be unable to resist her challenge. Virginia was glad that Vic had never taken a course in psychology.

Vic and Virginia brought the vat into Uncle Goom's office.

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"Steady," growled the voice from inside the vat. "Steady there, all, you're tickling me."

Miss Kronk, the presidential secretary looked startled. "That sounded like—"

"It is," said Vic, "and what he hopes to accomplish without his skeleton is beyond me. They'll only throw him out of the company."

"They can't," said Goom. "I have Mullen's proxy."

"Well," said Virginia, listening at the closed mahogany double doors, "the Board's meeting now. I can hear them. And somehow we've got to take him in and get him to vote. So how do we do it?"

Miss Kronk bustled around her desk, feeling her responsibilities. "I trust there's nothing wrong with Mr. Goom," she said. "May I look at him?"

Vic lifted off the vat cover and she peered in.

"UUuuee!" said Miss Kronk, sliding noisily to the floor in a faint.

The clear jello surged up into a head. "Somebody stop that damn girl from fainting," Uncle Goom ordered, blue eyes dangerous. "And quit talking about me as if I weren't here. Now get me ready for the Board meeting."

Vic laughed ironically. "We can pour you on the table, perhaps, but I'm afraid your friends wouldn't react properly. They'd just pull their investments out of the company."

"He's right," sighed Virginia. "Cutter would make jello out of you—" she bit her tongue. It had been hard trying to keep the team pulling together, and now it was beginning to look futile.

"Nonsense," snapped Uncle Goom. "They may not accept me without my skeleton, but I shall provide myself with one. That's why I had you sneak me in the back way."

"Let's see you make a skeleton!" jeered Vic.

"Any fool who's taken high school biology could answer that one," sneered Uncle Goom. "There is the whole order of creatures that exist with skeletons that are *external*. A lobster, for instance."

"Crustaceans!" breathed Virginia in awe.

Vic shrugged. "If you've got time to grow a shell, grow a shell," he said. "But I still say you'd better wait until the end of March when your own skeleton will be back from the moon and I can rebone you, as Pitch calls it."

But Uncle Goom was sending out a pseudo-pod to the intercom. "Get me the best Goom gabardine in the plant," he ordered. "And a Goom shirt, tie, gloves, the works!"

"We have, as you know, until noon to accept or reject the offer to sub-contract for Triumphant

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Textiles on the space suits," said Cutter, self-satisfied. "My own feeling, gentlemen, is that there's entirely too much talk around here about quality and not enough about making money. So I hope this vote will be the last one!"

Heads nodded in agreement just as Uncle Goom walked in.

True, he wore a hat on his head, and heavy spectacles pouched up a rather sloping brow. True, he wore gloves and a suit that seemed to bulge a little. And he looked as pale as a man after a heart attack, as limpid as white jello. But who could gainsay the fierce blue eyes and the cigar?

"Gentlemen," he said. "I am here with Cousin Mullen's proxy from the moon, and I vote against the new contract. This ends the meeting."

Cutter stood up again, flushing. "Not quite, Goom," he said. "We've decided that if you did get that proxy, we'd pull out of the company, and I don't think you have enough capital to go it alone. We don't ask much—just the chance to make money."

"And you *shall* make money!" cried Uncle Goom. "While Triumphant Textiles steadily goes broke, because space suits, gentlemen, are a thing of the past!"

They stared at him in his peculiar get-up and with his wild talk, as if they knew now he'd gone over the brink.

He told them about the Travel-easy. How you could get to the moon for $68.14, and wear a Goom gabardine until your skeleton arrived. He told them how interesting it was not to have a skeleton. How more and more people would spend more and more time in external Goom skeletons, using their own primarily for blood rebuilding and other biological necessities, perhaps only a few days each month. It took him eight minutes to say all this and by that time the call from Triumphant Textiles was on the phone.

Cutter rose in triumph. "I had expected resistance, Goom," he said, "but not madness. This is the craziest talk of the year! I fear that senile old age is about to lay waste to Goom Looms."

"Suppose I could show you a man, a perfectly happy man without his skeleton," said Uncle Goom easily. "Would this prove to you that mankind is entering a new age, along with Goom Looms?"

Cutter smiled around the room, drawing up the sympathetic smiles of the others at the poor old fool's nonsense. It was a shame to rough-handle the old boy, but he deserved it.

"Show me, Goom," he said. "And I'll be first to change my mind. What would your superman look like? A bowl of jello, I suppose. No, Goom, we're on to your senile fancy-ings—"

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Uncle Goom took off his hat.

"—we no longer propose to suffer your childish imaginings—"

Uncle Goom removed his spectacles, his necktie and his coat.

"—your e-ego is r-ruining the c-c-company—"

Uncle Goom took off his shirt.

"we c-can no longer—we can n-n-no l-l-l-longer—"

Uncle Goom started to remove his pants.

"—UUUUUUUUeeeeeeee!" finished Cutter, fainting.

Uncle Goom poured easily down the table, graciously offering three or four hands here, a cigar-light there, and an occasional slap on the shoulder, leaving a trail of fainting directors. But he remembered to make a special eye to wink at the picture of his father unperturbed on the wall. Perhaps the old boy would have been glad to know that Reginald Goom had done a bit more than design a new lapel in his Goom time.

Through Time And Space With Ferdinand Feghoot: XVI

Ferdinand Feghoot was once Emperor of China, ruling as Fei Hu (357-329 B. C.) Arriving as a time-tourist, he was so much taken with the court ladies that he chose to remain; and the aged Emperor, struck by his wisdom, quickly adopted him.

His reign was one of great splendor, and it was only in its twenty-eighth year that he sadly called back his chronoscooter. It appeared as one of those miniature clouds seen in Chinese scroll paintings. He mounted it before his whole court.

"Son of Heaven," wept his Prime Minister, "though you ascend on the Dragon, your innumerable children enrich us. You have mentioned your red-haired cousin. We beg you, send him to rule us and beget many more children like these!"

As Feghoot had a lot of blonde genes, his children really stood out from the crowd. Because this had aroused so much envy and caused them endless puzzlement and distress, he had decided to abdicate. So he shook his head firmly.

"But we need more of them," cried the Minister. "Think of their great Filial Piety. They are headed along the True Way!"

"No," said Ferdinand Feghoot. "I must leave you my Tao-headed children—but my cousin would make Confucians even worse confounded."

—GRENDEL BRIARTON

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Howard Fast's second F&SF story concerns a crime committed by 300 honorable men and women—and recommitted annually 61 times. The victim is a man of brilliance and strong character, and the question is—is it fitting, or is it possibly not, that the deed is always done at Christmastime? . . .

THE COLD, COLD BOX

by Howard Fast

AS ALWAYS, THE ANNUAL MEETING of the Board of Directors convened at nine o'clock in the morning, on the 10th of December. Nine o'clock in the morning was a sensible and reasonable hour to begin a day's work, and long ago, the 10th of December had been chosen as a guarantee against the seduction of words. Every one of the directors would have to be home for the Christmas holiday—or its equivalent—and therefore the agenda was timed for precisely two weeks and not an hour more.

In the beginning, this had caused many late sessions, sometimes two or three days when the directors met the clock round, with no break for sleep or rest. But in time, as things fell into the proper place and orderly management replaced improvisation, each day's meeting was able to adjourn by four o'clock in the afternoon—and there were even years when the general meeting finished its work a day or two early.

By now, the meeting of the Board of Directors was very matter-of-fact and routine. The big clock on the wall of the charming and spacious meeting room was just sounding nine, its voice low and musical, as the last of the directors found their seats. They nodded pleasantly to each other, and if they were seated close to old friends, they exchanged greetings. They were completely relaxed, neither tense nor uneasy at the thought of the long meeting that lay ahead of them.

There were exactly three hundred of these directors, and they sat in a comfortable circle of many tiers of seats—in a room not unlike a small amphitheatre. Two aisles cut through to a center circle or stage about twenty feet in diameter, and there a podium was placed which allowed the speaker

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to turn in any direction as he spoke. Since the number of three hundred was an arbitrary one, agreed upon after a good deal of trial and error, and maintained as an excellent working size, half the seats in the meeting room were always empty. There was some talk now and then of redesigning the meeting room, but nobody ever got down to doing it and by now the empty seats were a normal part of the decor.

The membership of the Board was about equally divided between men and women. No one could serve under the age of thirty, but retirement was a matter of personal decision, and a reasonable number of members were over seventy. Two thirds of them were in their fifties. Since the Board was responsible for an international management, it was only natural that all nations and races should be represented—black men and white men and brown men and yellow men, and all the shadings and gradations in between. Like the United Nations—they were too modest to make such a comparison themselves—they had a number of official languages (and a system of simultaneous translation), though English was most frequently used.

As a matter of fact, the Chairman of the Board, who had been born in Indo-China, opened this meeting in English, which he spoke very well and with ease, and after he had welcomed them and announced the total attendance—all members present—he said,

"At the beginning of our annual meeting—and this is an established procedure, I may say—we deal with a moral and legal point, the question of Mr. Steve Kovac. We undertake this before the reading of the agenda, for we have felt that the question of Mr. Kovac is not a matter of agenda or business, but of conscience. Of our conscience, I must add, and not without humility; for Mr. Kovac is the only secret of this meeting. All else that the Board discusses, votes upon and decides or rejects, will be made public, as you know. But of Mr. Steve Kovac the world knows nothing; and each year in the past, our decision has been that the world should continue to know nothing about Mr. Kovac. Each year in the past, Mr. Kovac has been the object of a cruel and criminal action by the members of this Board. Each year in the past, it has been our decision to repeat this crime."

To these words, most of the members of the Board did not react at all—but here and there young men and women showed their surprise bewilderment and unease, either by the expressions on their faces or by low protestations of disbelief. The members of the Board were not insensitive people.

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"This year, as in the past, we make this question of Mr. Kovac our first piece of business—because we cannot go onto our other business until it is decided. As in the past, we will decide whether to engage in a criminal conspiracy or not."

A young woman, a new member of the board, her face flushed and angry, rose and asked the chairman if he would yield for a question, He replied that he would.

"Am I to understand that you are serious, Mr. Chairman, or is this some sophomoric prank for the edification of new members?"

"This board is not used to such descriptive terms as sophomoric, as you should know, Mrs. Ramu," he answered mildly. "I am quite serious."

The young woman sat down. She bit her lower lip and stared at her lap. A young man arose.

"Yes, Mr. Steffanson?" the chairman said pleasantly.

The young man sat down again. The older members were gravely attentive, thoughtful without impatience.

"I do not intend to choke off any discussion, and I will gladly yield to any questions," said the Chairman, "but perhaps a little more about this troublesome matter first. There are two reasons why we consider this problem each year. Firstly, because the kind of crime we have committed in the past is hardly anything to grow indifferent to; we need to be reminded; premeditated crime is a deadly threat to basic decency, and God help us if we should ever become complacent! Secondly, each year, there are new members on this board, and it is necessary that they should hear all of the facts in the case of Mr. Kovac. This year, we have seven new members. I address myself to them, but not only to them. I include all of my fellow members of this Board."

Steve Kovac (the President of the Board began) was born in Pittsburgh in the year 1913. He was one of eleven children, four of whom survived to adulthood. This was not too unusual in those days of poverty, ignorance and primitive medicine.

John Kovac, Steve Kovac's father, was a steelworker. When Steve Kovac was six years old, there was a long strike—an attempt on the part of the steelworkers to increase their wages. I am sure you are all familiar with the method of the strike, and therefore I will not elaborate.

During this strike, Steve Kovac's mother died; a year later, John Kovac fell into a vat of molten steel. The mother died of tuberculosis, a disease then incurable. The father's body was dissolved in the molten steel. I mention these things in terms of their

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very deep and lasting effect on the mind and character of Steve Kovac. Orphaned at the age of seven, he grew up like an animal in the jungle. Placed in a county home for orphan children, he was marked as a bad and intractable boy, beaten daily, deprived of food, punished in every way the ignorance and insensitivity of the authorities could devise. After two years of this, he ran away.

This is a very brief background to the childhood of a most remarkable man, a man of brilliance and strong character, a man of high inventive genius and grim determination. Unfortunately, the mind and personality of this man had been scarred and traumatized beyond redemption. A psychiatric analysis of this process has been prepared, and each of you will find a copy in your portfolio. It also itemizes the trials and suffering of Steve Kovac between the ages of nine and twenty—the years during which he fought to survive and to grow to adulthood.

It also gives a great many details of this time of his life—details I cannot go into. You must understand that while the question before us is related to this background, there are many other features I will deal with.

At this point, the Chairman of the Board paused to take a drink of water and to glance through his notes. The younger members of the Board glanced hurriedly at the psychiatric report; the older members remained contemplative, absorbed in their own thoughts. As many times as they had been through this, somehow it was never dull.

At the age of twenty (the Chairman resumed) Steve Kovac was working in a steel mill outside of Pittsburgh. He was friendly then with a man named Emery. This man, Emery, was alone, without family or means of support. A former coal miner, he suffered from a disease of the lungs, common to his trade. All he had in the world was a five thousand dollar insurance policy. Steve Kovac agreed to support him, and in return he made Kovac the beneficiary of the insurance policy. In those days, insurance policies were frequently the only means with which a family could survive the death of the breadwinner.

Four months later, Emery died. Years afterward, it was rumored that Kovao had hastened his death, but there is no evidence for the rumor. The five thousand dollars became the basis for Steve Kovac's subsequent fortune. Twenty-five years later, the net worth of Steve Kovac was almost three billion dollars. As an individual, he was possibly the wealthiest man in the United States of America. He was a tycoon in the steel and aluminum

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industries, and he controlled chemical plants, copper mines, railroads, oil refineries and dozens of associated industries. He was then forty-six years old. The year was 1959.

The story of his climb to power and wealth is unique for the generations he lived through. He was a strong, powerful, handsome man—tortured within himself, driven by an insatiable lust to revenge himself, and his father and mother too, for the poverty and suffering of his childhood. Given the traumatic factors of his childhood, his cravings for power turned psychopathic and paranoid, and he built this structure of power securely. He owned newspapers as well as airlines, television stations and publishing houses, and much more than he owned, he controlled. Thereby, he was able to keep himself out of the public eye. In any year of the fifties, you can find no more than an occasional passing reference to him in the press.

How an individual achieved this in a time of the public corporation and the "corporation man" is a singular tale of drive and ambition. Steve Kovac was ambitious, ruthless, merciless and utterly without compassion or pity. His policy was to destroy what stood in his way, if he could; if he could not, he bent it to his will in one way or another. He wrecked lives and fortunes. He framed and entrapped his competitors; he used violence when he had to—when he could not buy or bribe what he wanted. He corrupted individuals and bribed parliaments and bought governments. He erected a structure of power and wealth and control that reached out to every corner of the globe.

And then, in his forty-sixth year, at the height of his wealth and power, he discovered that he had cancer.

The Chairman of the Board paused to allow the impact of the words to settle and tell. He took another drink of water. He rearranged the papers in front of him.

"At this time," he said, "I propose to read to you a short extract from the diary of Dr. Jacob Frederick. I think that most of you are familiar with the work of Dr. Frederick. In any case, you know that he was elected a member of our Board. Naturally, that was a long time ago. I need only mention that Dr. Frederick was one of the many wise and patient pioneers in the work of cancer research—not only a great physician, but a great scientist. The first entry I propose to read is dated January 12, 1959."

I had an unusual visitor today (The Chairman of the Board read), Steve Kovac, the industrial tycoon. I had heard rumors to the effect of the wealth and power of this man. In himself, he is a strik-

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ing individual, tall, muscular, handsome with a broad strong face and a great mane of prematurely-white hair. He has blue eyes, a ruddy complexion, and appears to be in the prime of life and health. Of course, he is not. I examined him thoroughly. There is no hope for the man.

"Doctor," he said to me, "I want the truth. I know it already. You are not the first physician I have seen. But I also want it from you, plainly and bluntly."

I would have told him in any case. He is not the kind of a man you can lie to easily. "Very well," I said to him, "you have cancer. There is no cure for your cancer. You are going to die."

"How long?"

"We can't say. Perhaps a year."

"And if I undergo operative procedure?"

"That could prolong your life—perhaps a year or two longer if the operation is successful. But it will mean pain and incapacity."

"And there is no cure?" His surface was calm, his voice controlled; he must have labored for years to achieve that kind of surface calm and control; but underneath, I could see a very frightened and desperate man.

"None as yet."

"And the quacks and diet men and the rest—they promise cures?"

"It's easy to promise," I said. "But there isn't any cure."

"Doc," he said to me, "I don't want to die and I don't intend to die. I have worked twenty-five years to be where I am now. The tree is planted. I'm going to eat the fruit. I am young and strong—and the best years of my life are ahead of me."

When Kovac talked like that, he was convincing, even to me. It is his quality not simply to demand of life, but to take. He denies the inevitable. But the fact remained.

"I can't help you, Mr. Kovac," I told him.

"But you're going to help me," he said calmly. "I came to you because you know more about cancer than any man in the world. Or so I am told."

"You have been misinformed," I said shortly. "No man knows more than anyone else. Such knowledge and work is a collective thing."

"I believe in men, not mobs. I believe in you. Therefore, I am ready to pay you a fee of one million dollars if you can make it possible for me to beat this thing and live a full life span." He then reached into his coat for his wallet and took out a certified check for one million dollars. "It is yours—if I live."

I told him to return the following day—that is, tomorrow. And now I have been sitting here for hours, thinking of what one million dollars would mean to my work, my hopes—indeed, through them, to all people. I have been thinking with desperation and

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with small result. Only one thought occurs to me. It is fantastic, but then Steve Kovac is a fantastic man.

Again, the Chairman of the Board paused and looked inquiringly at some of the younger members. They had been listening with what appeared to be hypnotic concentration. There were no questions and no comments.

"Then I will continue with the diary of Dr. Frederick," the Chairman said.

January 13, (the Chairman said). Steve Kovac returned at 2:00, as we had arranged. He greeted me with a confident smile.

"Doc, if you are ready to sell, I am ready to buy."

"And you really believe that you can buy life?"

"I can buy anything. It's a question of price."

"Can you buy the future?" I asked him. "Because that is where the cure for cancer lies. Do you want to buy it?"

"I'll buy it because you have decided to sell," he said flatly. "I know who I am dealing with. Make your offer. Dr. Frederick."

I made it, as fantastic as it was. I told him about my experiments with the effects of intense cold upon cancer cells. I explained that though, as yet, the experiments had not produced any cure, I had made enormous strides in the intense and speedy application of extreme cold—or, to put it more scientifically, my success in removing heat from living objects. I detailed my experiments—how I had begun with frogs and snakes, freezing them, and then removing the cold and resuming the life process at a later date; how I had experimented with mice, cats, dogs—and most recently, monkeys.

He followed me and anticipated me. "How do you restore life?" he wanted to know.

"I don't restore it. The life never dies. In the absence of heat, what might be called the ripening or aging process of life is suspended, but the life remains. Time and motion are closely related; and under intense cold, motion slows and theoretically could cease—all motion, even within the atomic structure. When the motion ceases, time ceases."

"Is it painful?"

"As far as I know, it isn't. The transition is too quick."

"I'd like to see an experiment."

I told him that I had in my laboratory a spider monkey that had been frozen seven weeks ago. My asistants could attest to that. He went into the laboratory with me and watched as we successfully restored the monkey. Seemingly, it was none the worse.

"And the mind?" he asked me.

I shrugged. "I don't know. I have never attempted it with a human being."

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"But you think it would work?"

"I am almost certain that it would work. I would need better and larger equipment. With some money to spend, I can improve the process—well, considerably."

He nodded and took the certified check out of his wallet. "Here is your retainer—apart from what you have to spend. Buy whatever you need, and charge it to me. Spend whatever you have to spend and buy the best. No ceiling, no limit. And when I wake up, after a cure has been discovered, there will be a second million to add to your fee. I am not a generous man, but neither am I niggardly when I buy what I want. When will you be ready?"

"Considering the prognosis of your disease," I said, "we should not delay more than five weeks. I will be ready then. Will you?"

Steve Kovac nodded. "I will be ready. There are a good many technical and legal details to work out. I have many and large interests, as you may know, and this is a journey of uncertain duration. I will also take care of your own legal responsibilities."

Then he left, and it was done—possibly the strangest agreement ever entered into by a doctor and his patient. I try to think of only one thing—that I now have a million dollars to put into my work and research.

The Chairman of the Board wore pince-nez, and now he paused to wipe them. He cleared his throat, rearranged the papers on the podium once again, and explained.

You see, the plan was a simple one and a sensible one too. Since Mr. Kovac's condition could not be cured, here was a means of preserving his life and arresting the disease until science had found a cure. Timidity was never one of Mr. Kovac's qualities. He analyzed the situation, faced it, and accepted the only possible escape offered to him. So he went about placing his affairs in such order as to guarantee the success and prosperity of his enterprises while he slept—and also their return to his bidding and ownership when he awoke.

In other words, he formed a single holding company for all of his many interests. He gathered together a Board of Directors to manage that holding company in his absence, making himself president in absentia, with a substitute president to preside while he was gone. He made a set of qualifying bylaws, that no president could hold office for more than two years, that the Board was to be enlarged each year and a number of other details, each of them aimed at the single goal of retaining all power to himself. And because he was not dead, but merely absent, he created a unique situation, one

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unprecedented in the history of finance.

This holding company was exempted from all the traditional brakes and tolls placed upon previous companies through the mechanism of death. Until Mr. Kovac returned, the holding company was immortal. Naturally, Dr. Frederick was placed upon the Board of Directors.

In other words (the Chairman of the Board concluded) that is how this Board of Directors came into being.

He allowed himself his first smile then. "Are there any questions at this point?" he asked mildly.

A new member from Japan rose and wanted to know why, if this was the case, the whole world should be told otherwise?

We thought it best (said the President). Just as we, on this Board, have great powers for progress and construction, so do we have no inconsiderable powers of concealment and alteration. The people of the United States and the United Kingdom might have accepted the knowledge that Steve Kovac brought this Board of Directors into being, but certainly in the Soviet Union and China, such knowledge might have been most disconcerting and destructive. Remember that once we had established an open trade area in the Soviet Union and had brought three of her leading government people onto our Board of Directors, our situation changed radically. We were enabled then, through a seizure of all fuel supplies on earth, to prevent the imminent outbreak of World War III.

At that point, neither the extent of our holdings nor the amount of our profits could be further concealed. I say we (the Chairman deferred modestly) but of course it was our predecessors who faced these problems. Our cash balance was larger than that of the United States Treasury, our industrial potential greater than that of any major power. Believe me, without planned intent or purpose, this Board of Directors suddenly found itself the dominant force on earth. At that point, it became desperately necessary for us to explain what we represented.

A new member from Australia rose and asked, "How long was that, Mr. Chairman, if I may inquire, after the visit of Mr. Kovac to Dr. Frederick?"

The Chairman nodded. "It was the year Dr. Frederick died—twenty-two years after the treatment began. By then, five types of cancer had already surrendered their secret to science. But there was not yet any cure for Mr. Kovac's disease."

"And all the time, the treatment had remained secret?"

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"All the time," the Chairman nodded.

You see (he went on), at that time, the Board felt that the peoples of Earth had reached a moment of crisis and decision. A moment, I say, for the power was only momentarily in the hands of this Board. We had no armies, navies or air-fleets—all we had were a major portion of the tools of production. We knew we had not prevented war but simply staved it off. This was a Board of Directors for management, not for power, and any day the installations and plants we owned and controlled could have been torn from our grasp. That was when our very thoughtful and wise predecessors decided to embark on a vast, global propaganda campaign to convince the world that we represented a secret Parliament of the wisest and best forces of mankind—that we were in effect a Board of Directors for the complex of mankind.

And in this, we succeeded, for the television stations, the newspapers, the radio, the film and the theatre—all these were ours. And in that brief, fortunate moment, we launched our attack. We used the weapons of Steve Kovac—let us be honest and admit that. We acted as he would have acted, but out of different motives entirely.

We bought and bribed and framed. We infiltrated the parliaments of all mankind. We bought the military commanders. We dissolved the armies and navies in the name of super-weapons, and then we destroyed the super-weapons in the name of mankind. Where leaders could not be bought or bribed, we brought them into our Board. And above all, we bought control—control of every manufacturing, farming or mining unit of any consequence upon the face of the earth.

It took the Board of Directors twenty-nine years more to accomplish this; and at the end of that twenty-nine years, our earth was a single complex of production for use and happiness—and if I may say so, for mankind. A semblance of national structure remained, but it was even then as ritualistic and limited as any commonwealth among the old states of the United States. Wars, armies, navies, atom bombs—all of these were only ugly memories. The era of reason and sanity began, the era of production for use and life under the single legal code of man. Thus, we have become creatures of law, equal under the law, and abiding by the law. This Board of Directors was never a government, nor is it now. It is what it proposes to be, a group management for the holding company.

Only today, the holding company and the means of mankind are inseparable. Thereby, our very great responsibility.

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The Chairman of the Board wiped his face and took a few more sips of water. A new member from the United States rose and said,

"But, Mr. Chairman, the cure for all types of cancer was discovered sixty-two years ago."

"So it was," the Chairman agreed.

"Then, Steve Kovac—" The new member paused. She was a beautiful, sensitive woman in her middle thirties, a physicist of note and talent, and also an accomplished musician.

"You see, my dear," the Chairman said, lapsing into a most informal mode of address, pardonable only because of his years and dignity, "it faced us. When we make a law for mankind and submit to it, we must honor it. Sixty-two years ago, Steve Kovac owned the world and all its wealth and industry, a dictator beyond the dream of any dictator, a tyrant above all tyrants, a king and an emperor to dwarf all other kings and emperors—"

As he spoke, two of the older members left the meeting room. Minutes later, they returned, wheeling into the room and up to the podium a rectangular object, five feet high, seven feet long and three feet wide, the whole of it covered with a white cloth. They left it there and returned to their seats.

"—yes, he owned the world. Think of it—for the first time in history, a just peace governed the nations of mankind. Cities were being rebuilt, deserts turned into gardens, jungles cleared, poverty and crime a thing of the past. Man was standing erect, flexing his muscles, reaching out to the planets and the stars—and all of this belonged to a single savage, merciless, despotic paranoid, Steve Kovac. Then, as now, my dear associates, this Board of Directors was faced with the problem of the man to whom we owed our existence, the man who all unwittingly unified mankind and ushered in the new age of man—yes, the man who gave us the right and authority to hold and manage, the man whose property we manage. Then as now, we were faced with Steve Kovac!"

Almost theatrical in his conclusion and gestures, the Chairman of the Board stepped down from the podium and with one motion swept the cloth aside. The entire Board fixed their eyes on the cabinet where, under a glass cover, in a cold beyond all concept of cold, a man lay sleeping in what was neither life nor death, but a subjective pause in the passage of time. He was a handsome man, big and broad, ruddy of face and with a fine mane of white hair. He seemed to sleep lightly, expectantly, confidently—as if he were dreaming hungrily but pleasantly of what he would awaken to.

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"Steve Kovac," the President said. "So he sleeps, from year to year, no difference, no changes. So he appeared to our predecessors sixty-two years ago, when they first had the means to cure him and the obligation to awaken him. They committed the first of sixty-two crimes; they took no action in the face of a promise, a duty, a legality and an almost sacred obligation. Can we understand them? Can we forgive them? Can we forgive the board that voted this same decision again and again? Above all, can we forgive ourselves if we stain our honor, break the law, and ignore our own inheritance of an obligation?

"I am not here to argue the question. It is never argued. The facts are presented, and then we vote. Therefore, will all those in favor of awakening Mr. Kovac raise their right hands?"

The President of the Board waited. Long moments became minutes, but no hands were raised. The two older members covered the cold, cold box and wheeled it out. The Chairman of the Board took a sip of water, and announced,

"We will now have the reading of the agenda."

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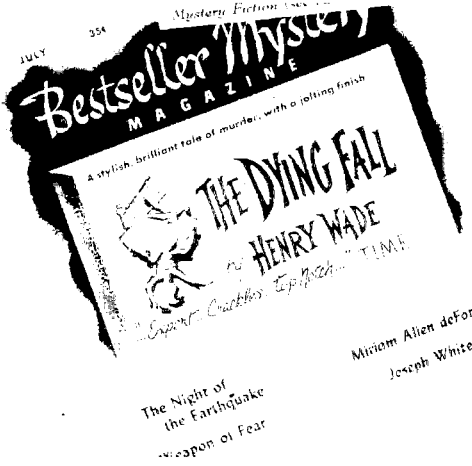

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